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SERMONS

NEW YORK:—J. LEAVITT,
182, Broadway.
.....
1832.

SERMONS

AND

SACRAMENTAL EXHORTATIONS.

BY THE LATE

ANDREW THOMSON, D. D.

MINISTER OF ST. GEORGE'S CHURCH, EDINBURGH.

First American Edition.

BOSTON:
PUBLISHED BY CROCKER AND BREWSTER,
47, Washington Street.
NEW YORK:—J. LEAVITT,
182, Broadway.

1832.

THE NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
490279
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS.
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MEMOIR

OF

ANDREW THOMSON, D. D.

THE time has not perhaps arrived when justice can be done to an extended Memoir of the late Dr. THOMSON, a task which it is to be hoped some of his early friends will be induced to undertake. In the mean time, the following brief notice may not be unacceptable, as an introduction to a volume of his posthumous discourses.

Dr. Andrew Thomson was born at Sanquhar, in Dumfries-shire, on the 11th of July, 1779. His father was the late Dr. John Thomson, one of the ministers of Edinburgh; at the time of his son's birth, minister of Sanquhar, and, subsequently, of Markinch in Fife. The subject of this Memoir, without affording any striking proof of premature scholarship, from which an augury of his future fame might have been drawn, was remarkable from his earliest years for intelli-

gence and vivacity, and especially for that free, manly, openhearted character, which, in after life, gave him so strong a hold on the affections of all who intimately knew him. It is difficult to say at what precise period his thoughts first turned seriously to the ministry: but he had not been many years at college before he exhibited decided symptoms of the power of that vital religion, which forms the first and best qualification for the sacred office.

Early in 1802 he was licensed to preach the gospel, by the presbytery of Kelso; and on the 11th of March of the same year, he was ordained minister of the parish of Sprouston, within the bounds of the presbytery from which he had received licence. Shortly after his settlement at Sprouston, he married Miss Carmichael, by whom he had ten children, seven of whom are still alive. The result of this union was all the happiness which the marriage relation can afford; interrupted only to the afflicted survivor, by the melancholy event which has deprived her and her family of the society of one, who, if possible, was still more attractive and delightful in the family circle than he was commanding and distinguished in the public walks of professional and active life.

During his ministry at Sprouston, Dr. Thomson displayed the same vigor, earnestness, and fidelity, by which his labors, in more extensive spheres, were subsequently characterized. His interest in the external affairs of the church, was manifested by the share he began to take in the business of the ecclesiastical courts of which he was a member; while of his anxiety to promote the higher interests of religion, a satisfactory

evidence exists in the catechism on the Lord's Supper, which he published for the benefit of the young among his parishioners; a work which has passed through many editions; and which we have reason to know, has proved eminently useful to many besides those for whose use it was originally designed.

In the year 1808, Dr. Thomson was removed to the East Church, Perth. Here, in conjunction with his brother, and others of his friends, ministers of Perth and its neighborhood, he lived happily, and labored successfully, till the spring of 1810, when he received a presentation from the magistrates and council of Edinburgh, to the New Greyfriars church in that city. In this situation, better adapted to his talents, and to the active character of his mind than either of the preceding, he entered on a course of ministerial service, which proved in no ordinary degree acceptable and useful. Many who have since distinguished themselves for Christian worth and attainments, owed their first religious impressions to his discourses in the New Greyfriars. To the young, especially, and the students attending the university, his ministry was at this period peculiarly attractive. Previously to his coming to Edinburgh, it had been too much the policy of the town-council of that city to translate, from the country to churches in their gift, ministers of considerable age and standing, whose habits and whose style of preaching were formed; and who, from these circumstances, were less qualified than younger men to adapt their ministrations to the intelligence and taste of their new audience; who, coming from the country, where they had perhaps acquired a character for eloquence of a

certain popular, though not very accurate or refined description, and finding some change necessary, felt themselves at a loss how to proceed; and being neither willing to adhere to their former standard, nor able to conform to a better, sank down into inertness and inefficiency; satisfied with the substitution of tame correctness for the vigorous, though homely strain of their former pulpit addresses. At no period, perhaps, could this have been the case with the energetic and versatile mind of the subject of this Memoir. Happily, however, the time of life at which he entered on his labors in Edinburgh, conspired, with the peculiar turn of his mind, to render, in his instance, the adaptation of his pulpit ministrations natural and easy. In the opening vigor of his faculties, and with the habits of study which necessity imposes even on country clergymen at an early period of their ministry, Dr. Thomson commenced that arduous, but effective course of public service in the metropolis of Scotland, which it was his privilege to prosecute, with unabated vigor, to the close of his life. Those who recollect the period to which we now refer, as the commencement of that course, will remember the powerful impression produced on the mind of the public at large, by the commanding appeals of his occasional sermons for charitable objects; while those who enjoyed the benefit of his ordinary Sabbath ministrations, will recal with delight, and many of them with feelings deeper and more grateful than those of mere delight, the effect created by his lucid expositions of sacred Scripture, and by his earnest, eloquent, and affectionate addresses on the topics of Christian doctrine and Christian duty.

A few months after his admission into Edinburgh, Dr. Thomson, with the assistance of several of his clerical brethren, in the church and in the secession, commenced the publication of the Christian Instructor; a work that, in spite of the disfavor with which, in certain quarters, it has been regarded, and a want of the support which it justly merited from the friends both of religion and of the establishment, has been the means of doing incalculable service in many ways, to the cause of Christianity. As a monument of Dr. Thomson's indefatigable activity, the work has perhaps no parallel. For many years, not only did the task of editorship fall exclusively upon Dr. Thomson, but to him it was indebted for a large proportion of the best articles, whether in the miscellaneous or critical department, which, in the face of circumstances that tended to obstruct its circulation, and injure its popularity, continued to extort for it, from the religious public, a great share of favorable regard.

The charge of the Christian Instructor was not, however, his sole literary undertaking. To the Edinburgh Encyclopædia, conducted by Dr. Brewster, he contributed many articles, some of them of considerable interest, and all of them indicative of the patience of his research, the soundness of his judgment, and the unaffected vigor of his style.

In the year 1814, St. George's church, which had been for some years building, was ready for public worship, and was opened on Sunday, the 5th of June, of that year, by the late Rev. Sir Henry Moncrieff Wellwood, Bart., who preached from Ecclesiastes v. 1. As the individual best qualified to fill a very large

structure, situate, at that time, at the extremity of the city, Dr. Thomson was fixed upon as its minister, and to this charge he was admitted on Thursday, the 16th of June, 1814. Here the more public and brilliant part of his course commenced. He had difficulties to encounter, both in collecting and in retaining a congregation, which would have had a depressing effect on the mind of most men. To Dr. Thomson, however, who of all men was formed to contend with, and to master difficulties, these only gave interest to his new situation. They had no other effect on his elastic and enterprising spirit than to incite him to redoubled exertions, and to a more energetic display of ministerial fidelity. Being possessed of great natural fluency in point both of thought and of expression, he had not, up to the period of his appointment to St. George's been in the regular habit of writing out his discourses. Aware, however, of the importance of correctness and variety, in compositions addressed to an audience, composed chiefly of the higher classes of society in such a city as Edinburgh, he formed the resolution of adopting a new practice, and of preaching nothing which he had not carefully studied and prepared. In this way, while he followed a plan recommended by considerations both of duty and of expediency, he voluntarily incurred a new amount of labor. For many years, he weekly composed and wrote two discourses for the pulpit; and this at a time, when, in addition to other avocations, he was engaged in forming a ministerial acquaintance with a congregation unusually large, and composed of persons to whom the slight and hasty notices of ordinary parochial visitation would not have been appropriate.

But, if thus he added to his labors, he had also the satisfaction of perceiving that he had secured his usefulness. Over a description of persons, by many of whom, at the commencement of his ministry in St. George's, the peculiar doctrines and obligations of the gospel were little known or relished, Dr. Thomson speedily acquired an influence scarcely ever possessed by any preacher. Nor is it necessary to say, that he owed this enviable ascendancy to no compromise of principle—to no unworthy accommodation of divine truth to the prejudices of his audience. In addressing himself to a congregation peculiarly exclusive and sensitive, he stood upon the high ground of his office as an ambassador for Christ; and with the apostle of the Gentiles, to whose bold, unfearing character, his own, in many points, bore a striking resemblance, he determined to know nothing, as the subject of his ministry, but Jesus Christ and him crucified. How fully, effectively, and perseveringly, he adhered to his system, the recollection of his hearers, as well as the strain of his published discourses amply testify. The peculiar qualifications which he brought to his task are, at the same time, not to be overlooked. To a manner of great animation and fire, yet restrained and dignified, he added a style of uncommon simplicity and spirit, which nature enabled him to set off to advantage by the tones of a voice remarkable for compass and harmony. He delighted in argument; but his arguments were of that direct, palpable, practical character, which stimulate attention, and admit of being appreciated and followed by the most ordinary understanding; while the truths he labored to establish, were all of acknowledged

importance, bore so intimate a relation to the system which, as a Christian minister, it was his province to illustrate and enforce, and came so closely and powerfully home to every man's heart and conscience, that nothing could appear more natural than the pains he took to explain and defend them. As in the clear fountain of his thoughts, there were no turbid elements —no confusion of ideas—no obscure images—no surface on which a wayward fancy could paint the fluctuating figures of its own changeful extravagance—so in his discourses, all was simple, perspicuous, unaffected, and intelligible. Imagination was not perhaps his distinctive faculty; yet, even of the glow and peculiar effect of a well-disciplined imagination, his compositions were not destitute. When he chose, he could be tender, descriptive, and impassioned; and when he indulged neither in declamation addressed to the fancy, nor in appeals which went to the heart, he uniformly commanded attention by the clearness of his statements, the force of his reasonings, and the pointed and practical strain of his exhortations. It has been well remarked of him, that few men, and especially few public instructors, ever displayed a greater practical acquaintance with human nature, or could turn their knowledge to better account. His hearers accordingly, however secular their habits, could not but feel that they were addressed by one intimately conversant with life and manners: they could not evade the force of his arguments and lessons, by ascribing them to the ignorance or austerity of their instructor: they could not but perceive in his delineations of character, a faithful mirror, in which their own modes of thinking

and acting were exhibited to the life; nor could they be insensible to the value of warnings and of counsels, in which the acuteness of the man of liberal ideas and of general observation, was blended with the wisdom of the moralist, and the sanctity of the Christian and the Divine.

To causes such as these, accordingly, we are to ascribe the high place which Dr. Thomson acquired and held in the estimation of the religious public of Edinburgh. Nor, in any review of the religious history of the period, will the deserved fame of Dr. Thomson be overlooked, as one of the causes of the revived taste for the faithful preaching of the gospel which has happily characterized Edinburgh for the last fifteen or twenty years.

But Dr. Thomson was not satisfied with merely preaching the gospel. For many years after his appointment to St. George's, he employed the interval between the forenoon and afternoon services, in catechising the young belonging to the congregation: and this exercise he performed in a manner that had the effect, in an uncommon degree, of uniting to him the hearts both of parents and children.

Among the excellent practices recommended by the standards of the Church of Scotland, and by the example of the best of her ministers in her purest times, is that of week-day meetings in the church, for the purpose of instruction in the principles of religion, as these are taught in the Shorter Catechism. To attendance on such meetings in a city like Edinburgh some practical objections have been raised; and with a view to obviate these, Dr. Thomson instituted a lec-

ture, in which, without placing any one in the trying situation of a catechumen, he made use of a question in the catechism by way of text; and explaining and illustrating it in a manner adapted to all capacities, he went over the ground usually traversed in these exercises. For several years he continued these week-day expositions, during a limited period of the summer months, and was only induced to relinquish them, in consequence of repeated and alarming attacks of indisposition, which taught him the necessity of imposing a restraint upon the otherwise unwearied zeal of his active and benevolent mind.

In the youth of his congregation, Dr. Thomson, as we have observed, took a warm and affectionate interest. In his parish, he found there were many of this class whom his Sabbath instructions could not reach—young persons who either did not attend his church, or whose circumstances and those of their parents rendered a greater degree of tuition necessary, than it was possible to afford them on the Lord's day. To meet their case, accordingly, Dr. Thomson projected a week-day school. His influence enabled him speedily to raise the funds requisite for the erection of a suitable school-house; and the facility with which he could adapt himself to the operations of benevolence, enabled him to carry into effect the other means necessary to the completion of his plan. As his experience in the task of instructing the young of his congregation had shown him how much could be done with young people, by addressing their understanding and their affections, he undertook at once to compile suitable books for the different classes into which the school was

divided, and for a time to act as teacher and superintendent in the school. Far from despising what to other minds would have appeared to be drudgery, regarding it indeed with fondness, and entering into it with his whole heart, he spent entire days in teaching the children of the lower classes of his parish the elementary principles of education and religion, and passed from the school-house to his study, only to prosecute the other department of his labor of love; and, amid the humble toils of an author of first books for children, to lose sight of those more inviting objects of ambition, after which a mind like his might have been expected exclusively to aspire.

From nature he had received an exquisite ear and taste for music; and, upon the principle of consecrating all the gifts of nature to the service of his Master, he undertook a reformation of that part of the devotional service of the sanctuary which consists of praise. To him, in a great measure, are to be traced the recent improvements that have been effected in the psalmody of several churches in this city. His own church set the example; and for their use, and the better to accomplish his object, he drew up a collection of the most approved psalm tunes, all of which he carefully revised; and to which he added several original compositions, and a few of great beauty of his own. It may not be uninteresting to record, that but a few weeks before his death, he issued a circular, addressed to the members of his congregation, renewing his affectionate admonitions on the subject of church music, which he justly regarded as an expression of piety, and a help to devotion.

Nor were his private labors less abundant. Gre
as he was in the public sphere of his exertions, it ma
be questioned whether he did not appear even to mor
advantage in the less noticed walks of pastoral visitatio
among the families of his flock. His breast, naturall
full of kindness, expatiated, as in a congenial spher
while he sat by the sick-bed of those who looked t
him for consolation, or directed the hopes of th
bereaved and the dying to the land of promise and c
rest. They who knew him only as he appeared in th
field of controversy, or on the high places of debate, c
even in "the great congregation," where he poure
forth "words that breathed and thoughts that burned,
and held attention chained, till conviction came an
owned his power, can scarcely imagine the air of ter
derness and unaffected brotherhood and sympathy, th
pervaded his look and manner, in the more privat
offices of pastoral intercourse with the afflicted. It ha
pleased Providence often to try him during the cours
of his ministry: his mind, naturally full of affection an
sensibility, had undergone a variety of discipline. Fro
what he himself had felt, therefore, as well as fro
what his friendly heart could imagine, he entered wit
lively interest into all the causes of inquietude or su
fering, under which any of his flock might be laborin
To none could the sorrowful more freely unburde
their griefs; from none could the perplexed and fea
ful more confidently ask advice; and on none coul
the young and the inexperienced more certainly calcu
late for sympathy in their anxieties, and assistance i
regard to the objects they had in view. And whil

thus to those who knew him, (and who, if had they chosen, might not have known him?) he was a brother and a friend, all that he did was conceived in a spirit, and marked by a manner of most perfect unaffectedness. In his kindness there was nothing like effect; nothing like exaggeration; nothing that bore the remotest resemblance to acting. Nature reigned in all his words and deeds; and his whole conduct left on the mind the impression only of genuine, unpretending friendship. There was a manliness, too, in his kindness which was in strict keeping with the other parts of his character, and which helped to heighten the impression of reality produced by the general tone of his intercourse. It was the same man who in other circumstances could lighten, and agitate, and hold imperial sway over the passions of the most crowded meeting, who sat beside you as a friend, and addressed you in the words and accents of undissembled interest and regard.

But it was not merely as a parish minister, performing the full round of ordinary pastoral duty, that Dr. Thomson was remarkable. As a minister of the Church of Scotland, he was a member of her judicatories, and entrusted with the functions of an administrator of her laws. Justly conceiving every part of his duty to have a claim upon him, and appreciating the beneficial influence which his situation enabled him to exert on the interests of the establishment and of Christianity, he appeared regularly in his place in church courts, and took on him a large proportion of the burden of the business that came before these assemblies. Indeed, for the last few years of his life, such was his acquaintance

with form, such his aptitude in the application of prece dents and statutes, such his ability and eloquence in de bate, and such the estimation in which his opinions an character were held, that that party in the church t which he was conscientiously attached, and which mu: always regard it as not the least of its distinctions an recommendations to have numbered him among i: adherents, spontaneously, and by silent consent, looke up to him as its leader.

This is not the place for detail, otherwise it would b easy to record numerous instances of the zeal an effect with which he maintained the ancient struggle (the church against the inroads of a debasing and secu larizing policy. In every question of principle h espoused the side of truth and justice, in opposition t the maxims of expediency; a regard to which, whe: there exists a definite moral rule of conduct, he justl regarded as the bane of churches and of public institu tions. With admiration, mingled with affectionate r(gret, many of the readers of this sketch will recal th triumphs of his eloquence on the highest theatre of i display—the General Assembly; and will accompar the recollection with a profound feeling of gratitude the man who so often lifted up his intrepid voice, tones that found an echo in every parish in Scotlan against the power that would thrust upon a people hu gering for the bread of life, a heartless and unqualifie pastor; who fearlessly stood forth the champion resistance to the mandates of unauthorized dictati and intrusive influence; and who, with an energy a eloquence all his own, repudiated and denounced th union of secular with ecclesiastical offices, by whi

the sacredness of the pastoral character is deteriorated, and the unity of the pastoral obligation is violated. If to him the church be not indebted for a return to the principles and practices by which she was characterized in the days when, purified by persecution, she stood first among the churches of the Reformation—to him, and to the kindred labors of our Erskines and our Moncrieffs, whose mantle he had caught, does she in a great measure owe the remembrance of these principles and practices. By his exertions, in no inconsiderable degree, the ancient landmarks of our ecclesiastical constitution have been kept prominently in view; a desire for something better than the existing order of things has been preserved and transmitted; the watchwords of primitive order and popular rights have been dignified and hallowed by an association with a mighty name; and a prospect has been opened to the hopes of the church of brighter days, and of "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord."

But while he was thus, firmly, and on principle, identified with a particular party in the church, few men displayed in private life less of the narrow and exclusive spirit of party. His attachment to principles he bore with him everywhere: but the animosity and grudging, which are apt to cleave to minds of a secondary order, were strangers to his bosom; and with the men with whom he entered into keenest conflict on the arena of debate, he could meet on terms of the most unhesitating good will when the struggle was over, willing to exchange with them all the courtesies of social intercourse, or to co-operate with them in any good work in which they might require his aid, or solicit his

countenance. His was a mind that spurned the baseness of smothered resentment. He knew nothing of the creeping feeling that is "willing to wound, but yet afraid to strike." What he felt he expressed strongly and boldly; and if a brother felt aggrieved, none was more forward than he to make allowance for the expression of irritated feeling; or if, in a hasty moment, he had given undesigned cause of offence, none was more prompt in making reparation. If he was a formidable, his opponents will allow, that he was also an open, and a generous antagonist.

As a minister of the church of Scotland, he was deeply and conscientiously attached to her institutions and her interests. But because, as a churchman, he walked about our Zion, and went round about her, telling her towers, admiring her palaces, and employing all his energies in the defence of her bulwarks, his was not that exclusive and churlish spirit which saw nothing but barrenness beyond the enclosure, within which Providence had cast his lot. He mingled freely and cordially with dissenters of all descriptions, in whom he could trace the characters of genuine Christianity. The strength of his own convictions, as a churchman, only gave him a stronger sympathy in the conscientious convictions of the persons who differed from him. He felt too, that the cause he had embraced, was in no danger from any compliances which, on the ground of good feeling, or social observance, he might be induced to make. Above all, he felt that the differences between the great bodies of dissenters in this country, and the church of which he was a member, bore no proportion to the bond which unites Christians of every name in

the fellowship of one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all." That alone which repelled him in a dissenting brother, was a display on the part of that brother of the qualities which he himself abhorred, and of which no trace, to an unprejudiced eye, could be discovered in his conduct.

Although it was impossible that a mind like his could be indifferent to anything that concerned the well-being of his country, he took no public share in party politics. That he had decided views on all the important questions that divided the political world during the eventful period in which he lived, is certainly true; and that in private, or on any occasion in which his duty as a member of ecclesiastical courts called for the expression of his opinion, he was ready to express that opinion frankly and fearlessly, is equally true: but to his honor, it is to be recorded, that with a mind peculiarly awake to whatever involved the interests or the fame of his country, and with talents that peculiarly fitted him for maintaining the first place in all discussions of a public and exciting nature, so strong was his sense of the sacredness of the ministerial character, and so ready was he to sink all inferior or individual considerations in a regard to the solemn interests that were suspended on his relation to his flock, that he uniformly stood aloof from scenes of political contention, and bequeathed, in his example, an instructive illustration of the power of religious principle in enforcing self-denial, as to things in themselves lawful, but which in certain circumstances may not be expedient. Yet while such was the enlightened principle by which he was guided, it were a sacrifice of truth not to add, that his forbear-

"Scriptures which are given by inspiration of God." It is not too much to say, that the discovery came upon the Christian public with the force of a thunderbolt. All confidence in men, or in the most solemn protestations and professions, seemed to be at an end; and the first impulse, on the part of all who gave the subject an unbiassed consideration, was to demand not only that there should be an immediate return to the primary principle of the Society, but that its management should no longer be committed to men who had shown themselves incapable of being bound by what appeared the strongest obligations of Christian principle and moral feeling. Here it had been well, if first impressions had been consulted. To many of the friends of the institution, however, the Bible Society had been so long identified with the Bible which it professed to circulate, that the idea of abandoning it, seemed fraught with hazard to the best interests and hopes of Christianity. When, therefore, the directors of the Society, instead of listening to the remonstrances that were addressed to them from all quarters, and especially from the friends of the Society in Edinburgh, attempted to justify their conduct, on the pretext of an alleged ambiguity in the terms in which the object of the institution was expressed, and even on the ground of expediency, many of those with whom Dr. Thomson had previously associated, withdrew their testimony against the proceedings in question, expressed satisfaction with certain half-measures to which the directors pledged themselves for the future, and intimated an earnest anxiety that all farther allusion to the past should be dropped. To the ardent mind of Dr. Thomson, such a

course, whether on the part of the directors in London, or of their friends in Edinburgh, seemed nothing short of a dereliction of the first duty which man owes to the gracious Being who, in giving us a revelation of his will, has entrusted us with a talent which we can never do enough to guard from injury, and to preserve untarnished and entire as it reached us from his hands. With his characteristic energy, he enlisted himself on the side of what he conceived, and rightly conceived, to be the cause both of God and man; and summoning the resources of his powerful mind to the task, he devoted many of the days and nights of the latter years of his life in following the misjudging adherents of the British and Foreign Bible Society, through the maze of misrepresentation and sophistry, into which their short-sighted policy or obsequious predilections had plunged them. In this labor, worthy of a mind devoted, in the face of good report and of bad report, to the service of God, but from which a mind cast in a less firm mould would have shrunk, he had the satisfaction of carrying with him the convictions and the suffrages of a large majority of the people of Scotland. Yet, if for a moment he dreamed that the path on which he had entered was level and smooth, he was speedily destined to learn his mistake. Reproaches and misrepresentations assailed him from quarters whence he had the least reason to expect them. Some of the persons who had stood by his side at the commencement of the conflict, and who had rendered themselves conspicuous by the forwardness of their zeal, if not by the soundness of their discretion, thought fit to desert him; and others, on whose countenance and aid he might reasonably have calculated,

looked coldly on, and chafed his spirit, if they cc not sour his temper, or damp his exertions, by the t of their advice.*

It is not to be doubted, that the effect produced u Dr. Thomson's mind, by the manner in which som the leading advocates of the directors of the Bri and Foreign Bible Society conducted their share, of v has been called "The Apocryphal Controversy," m an impression on his health. Naturally of a more t usually robust constitution, he was capable of un going great fatigues; nor was his temper of that sitive and morbid character which dwells upon in ined injuries, or exaggerates petty slights into ser wrongs. Still the personal tone which the controv assumed in the hands of persons who, in the absenc argument, had recourse to recrimination and in combined with the sleepless nights and busy days w the part he had undertaken imposed on him, sile wore down the strength of his constitution, and pared it for yielding to that blow, unexpected perl by all but himself, which put a perpetual period tc labors and anxieties. Nothing, however, while remained, was permitted to stand in the way of exertions in behalf of his flock or of the cause of C tianity at large. While suffering from symptoms of

* Yet, "Raro eminentes viri non magnis adjutoribus usi sunt; i Scipiones, duobus Læliis, quos per omnia æquaverunt sibi; ut Augustus M. Agrippa;"—and the truth of this remark of the Roma torian, Dr. Thomson had the good fortune to experience in the fr and efficient co-operation of many good and able men—and of none the friends of the Bible cause have reason more highly to value, tha of Robert Haldane, Esquire, to whose exertions in behalf of the object which Dr. Thomson had at heart, it would be injustice t advert.

most depressing description, he was always at his post, ready with his pen, or with the still more effective instrumentality of his living voice, to forward the interests of pure and undefiled religion. In a state of health, which, to most men, would have furnished an irresistible plea for seclusion from the excitement of public business, he paid a visit to London; where, if he did little to place the ground of controversy between the two societies of London and Edinburgh in its proper light, before the religious public of the metropolis, the failure is to be ascribed to some other cause than a deficiency of zeal, of exertion, or of eloquence on his part. Inconsiderable as was his success in the metropolis, he had at least the satisfaction of doing all that was in his power, to bring the cause of the integrity of divine truth to an issue, in that quarter where it was most desirable that the question should be fairly heard and tried.

It is but justice, however, to the opponents of the cause in which Dr. Thomson was embarked, to say, that while his labors, and those of his associates in the cause of pure Bible circulation, failed of the grand object in view, they were not altogether destitute of success. While it is difficult to account for the conduct of the abettors of conjoint Bible and Apocryphal circulation, on any principle that will entirely save them from an imputation, unfavorable to the soundness of their moral perceptions, it is not to be forgotten, that the best of men are not exempt from serious frailties; that in some minds there seems to be a sort of natural deficiency of moral tact, which nothing can entirely supply; and that in others, a deficiency of the same

sort is liable to be induced, by habits of deference to authority, or of judging of the morality of actions by a reference to their consequences. On principles such as these, we are to account for the conduct of many of the official personages intrusted with the management of the funds and operations of the British and Foreign Bible Society; and to explain their blindness to the serious error in point of principle, and the no less serious mischief in point of consequences, involved in their departure from the primary law of the institution; and the pertinacity with which they still seem willing to adhere to their mistaken policy, in spite of the warnings and remonstrances which have been addressed to them. It cannot be doubted that, in the hearts of many even of those who seem resolute in error, the love of the Bible is really seated; and to this cause we are willing to ascribe the disposition, tardy and reluctant as it was, to compromise the question at issue between them and their antagonists in the north. And, though in such a case as that in which the honor and integrity of the divine word are involved, anything short of a return to the principle, of giving no countenance, direct or indirect, to a corruption of the sacred volume, must be regarded as less than the obligations of duty demand, still we are not to overlook any approximation to the principle, nor be unwilling to recognize in it the presage of better things in time to come, when the heats of excited feeling are allayed, and the lights of experience are brought to bear on a subject darkened by the contentions of rival opinions. To such an issue, despite of many discouraging appearances, we doubt not, things are rapidly tending. It were to despair of the

triumph of truth and righteousness, to imagine that the controversy between the London and Edinburgh Societies could always remain as it is. Time alone is required to inform the public mind of the nature and importance of the objects at stake, in order to work a change on the feeling of the people of England with regard to it. We have but to look a little way into the future to see the clouds that at present hang over the part taken by the several combatants cleared away; the cause of divine truth vindicated; the asperities produced in the course of the discussion forgiven and forgotten; and some of the very men who have been most wedded to false principles, and a mistaken policy, hastening to repair their error, by doing justice to the characters of those by whom that error was first pointed out, and by returning to the broad highway of "simplicity and godly sincerity," from which it had been happy they had never departed. Till this desirable consummation arrive, the friends of the purity of the divine record must pursue their path alone, satisfied that while they keep the honor of the God of truth in view, they are following a pillar of fire and cloud, which cannot mislead, and will not forsake them.*

* Since these lines were written, the British and Foreign Bible Society has held its annual meeting for 1831. And, however little the proceedings of that meeting may be calculated to encourage hopes founded on the good sense, or Christian feeling of the directors, they open a gratifying prospect in another quarter. A reaction in the public mind can scarcely fail to be the consequence of such glaring indiscretion, and such culpable indifference to all that is distinctive in Christian principle and Christian character, as are displayed by the resolutions finally agreed to at the meeting. Already, unequivocal symptoms of this reaction have begun to appear; in proof of which we need only refer to the proceedings of the last annual meeting of the London Naval and Military Bible Society, at which the resolution, negatived only the week before at the British and Foreign Bible Society,

The manner in which Dr. Thomson managed his share in this controversy must not be passed in silence. It was with all his heart and soul that he entered into the controversy: he brought all his powers to aid him in doing justice to it; and for a time at least, his whole mind and time were absorbed in it. In the object contended for, he beheld a principle at stake, which, as a Christian, a protestant, and a minister, he was bound to vindicate and maintain. It was not merely whether certain funds had been wisely or imprudently applied; whether certain individuals, to whom the public had been taught to look up with confidence, had been faithful to their trust; whether a less degree of good had been done, than the world, who heard of the operations of the society, had been led to imagine. Important as these considerations were, they were not the questions which especially struck his mind, in the discoveries which accident had made, of the proceedings of the directors and agents of the British and Foreign Bible Society. In the conduct of the society, as represented by these individuals, he beheld the grand leading principles of morality and religion placed in jeopardy. He saw the marked line of separation, which the Divine Being has drawn between his word and the imaginations of his fallible creatures, trodden down, and, so far as the operations of the society on the continent were concerned, in danger of being obliterated: He saw the

was carried by an overpowering majority. Will such a fact as this have no weight with the directors of the last mentioned Society; or, unwarned and untaught, will they pursue their headlong career, till, deserted by all the genuine friends of the Bible, and of the religion of the Bible, they find themselves alone, in melancholy fellowship with Arians, Socinians, and Freethinkers, the dregs and the refuse of nominal Christianity?

broad seal of heaven wrested from the page on which it had been impressed by the finger of God, and placed unscrupulously, and without discrimination, on lying legends and on "the true sayings of God." In all this, he beheld an object fitted to awaken all the energy of a mind trained to tremble at the Divine Word, to rouse into indignant and irrepressible feeling all the sensibilities of a soul that was "very jealous for the Lord God of Hosts."

It is easy for those whom providence has destined to dull mediocrity, by the constitutional slowness of their apprehensions, or the coldness of their feelings, to perceive, in the ardor with which Dr. Thomson prosecuted his task of exposing and rebuking what he regarded as criminal delinquency, something to censure: easy too, for those who have never mingled in the strife of "earnest contending for the faith once delivered to the saints," but have satisfied themselves with looking on, from the seclusion of their study, at the shock of arms, and the alternations of the battle, to be wise and charitable at the expense of the combatants: easier still for those, who have no sympathy in the object contended for, to reprobate the zeal with which the struggle for it is maintained. But, if we would form a correct estimate of the conduct of Dr. Thomson, in relation to the British and Foreign Bible Society, we must at once possess something of his character, and find ourselves placed nearly in his circumstances. The very features of his character as a controversialist, which may seem most to require softening, were connected with qualities for which his memory deserves most to be honored. If he assumed a decided attitude, and made use of strong

language, it was not because he cared little for the feel
ings, or was reckless of the character of his antagonists
but because his zeal for the truth made him less aliv
than were the lukewarm and the timid, to the effect hi
occasional warmth might have, on those with whom
sense of duty brought him into collision. In a struggle
unusually protracted, and in which, on the side of th
opposite party, in some memorable instances, not th
courtesies of debate merely, but the restraints of Chris
tian feeling and ordinary decorum were violated, it i
not to be wondered at that he should at times hav
caught the tone of his assailants—that he should occa
sionally have descended from the high ground of prin
ciple to occupy a position, in which, though he was no
less formidable, he appeared personally to less advan
tage—that, in short, like Luther and Calvin, and others
his predecessors in the task of correcting great abuses
he should occasionally have been tempted to forge
that "long forbearing" is sometimes the surest paren
of "persuasion," and that it is "a soft answer" whic
the wise man tells us "breaketh the bone." If mor
need be said on the subject, he himself has said it,* i
terms that leave us only to regret the close alliance o
great virtues with occasional errors, and which mus
satisfy even those who have least sympathy with th
workings of such a nature as his, that insensibility to hi
imperfections formed no feature of his character.

During the course of the winter preceding that i
which he died, he composed and preached a series o
discourses in reference to certain errors prevalent a

* See Dr. Thomson's speech at the extraordinary meeting of the Edi
burgh Bible Society, on the 1st March, 1830.

the time among many sincere, it is to be hoped, though mistaken Christians. These discourses are before the public; and in them, and in the notes appended to them, such as feel an interest in the confutation of the errors in question, will find the kindred subjects of universal pardon, and of personal assurance as essential to the nature of genuine faith, discussed with much eloquence and judgment; while they who wish merely to obtain clear and scriptural views of the doctrine of the atonement, and of the nature and workings of Christian experience, will meet with much in the volume to reward a careful perusal. In many parts of it, the author, in addition to his usual acuteness in the discrimination of character, and power of addressing himself to the conscience and heart, displays an extent of theological knowledge, and a clearness of doctrinal statement, of which his preceding publications had not perhaps afforded such decided examples. His acquaintance with human nature, his dexterity in searching to the bottom of it for the remote springs of thought and action, and his happy faculty of disembarrassing perplexed and intricate subjects, and of imparting a practical interest to topics which, in other hands, are apt to appear scholastic and uninviting, are also displayed to great advantage.

The last great public effort of Dr. Thomson was in behalf of the slave population of our West India colonies. In a note to a sermon published in his volume of "Discourses on various Subjects," he had taken up the question of the remedial measures proposed in behalf of that oppressed class of our fellow-subjects, and, with his characteristic frankness, declared himself an

advocate for immediate emancipation. The opinion he thus expressed was not the result of sudden impulse, but of a deliberate and well weighed consideration of the subject of compulsory servitude in all its bearings. On the one hand, he looked to the principles of morality and of the Scriptures; and from them he learned that to hold a fellow-creature in bondage is directly to violate the rule which dictates the same treatment of our neighbor as we ourselves have a right to expect from him. And to the mind of Dr. Thomson it appeared no less a crime to assume a right of property in a man under the tropics, than it would be to transfer that claim to the mother country, and to extend it over those who go out and come in among ourselves.

And, if in this conclusion, at which, in common with all disinterested persons, he had arrived, he was fortified by an appeal to the first principles of justice and humanity, his convictions acquired additional strength when he adverted to the evils which the system of slavery entails upon those by whom it is upheld, no less than upon those whose comfort and improvement it more immediately affects. For some time past, the public has been familiar with the complaints of the planters, that their property has fallen in value; and the least consideration of the subject is sufficient to convince every reasonable mind, that the cause is to be sought, not in accidental circumstances, but in the system of slavery itself. According to the West India proprietors, nothing can save their property and restore it to its former value, but a return to the system of absolute noninterference on the part of this country with their *treatment of* their slaves, or perhaps, as the language

of one of their recent manifestoes would seem to intimate, a renewal of the traffic in slaves. But for this Great Britain obviously is not prepared. And if not, are things then to continue as they are? Can the planter desire it? or will the slave long permit it? Colonial produce is at present depreciated; the colonies themselves are not what they were in point of productiveness; a spirit of insubordination and misrule is prevalent among the negroes: the slave eyes his master with the feeling of a foe, and goes through his work with the langor and reluctance characteristic of a state, in which the impulse of gratitude and the stimulus of hope are unknown. Some remedy for such a state of things must be sought and found. And Dr. Thomson, and those who think with him on this important subject, conceive that such a remedy presents itself in the abolition of slavery itself. The efficacy of the remedy they conceive to be founded in the immutable principles of human nature. Nor, in the conclusion to which they come in regard to it, do they rely on mere abstract and general principles. In the history of all states that have arrived at real and permanent greatness, they think they can trace a connexion, between the diffusion of freedom and the growth of national prosperity; and, in following the unwavering light of experience, they conceive that they are proposing neither an uncertain nor a hazardous experiment—depriving the planter of nothing really valuable in his property, but placing that property upon a firm and stable foundation, by removing the causes which are silently sapping and undermining it.

shaken; and in the rapturous acclamations of a crowd assembly, had the satisfaction of listening to the fi echo, which Great Britain through all her provinces yet destined to send back, to the call of justice and r ligion, in behalf of the injured children of her colonie

Subsequently to these proceedings, a meeting to place of the friends of immediate abolition, at whi Dr. Thomson attended, supported by the directors the anti-slavery society, who, with a few exceptio had obeyed the general impulse, and entered cordial into his enlarged and energetic views. His appearan on this occasion has been described by a writer of t day, as "a most splendid and varied display of wit, a gument, and impressive eloquence." The moral di nity of the subject seemed to have imparted its charact to the man and to his eloquence. Never perhaps d he appear more truly great.

In the course of his address he took an opportuni of more fully developing his views on the importa question of immediate emancipation. To many, t word *immediate* has proved a formidable stumbli block, suggesting the idea of a sudden dissolution all the bonds by which society in the colonies is he together. To such persons it might seem necessa only to say, that freedom in this country is attended no such unhappy results; and that which experien proves to be no evil in this country, need not, unle through culpable mismanagement, be an evil elsewhe The truth is, while an immediate declaration of freedc in behalf of the slave population of the colonies is d manded by every principle of justice, humanity, religic *and sound* political wisdom, it is the duty of tho

whose province it is to make the declaration, to accompany it by such precautionary provisions as shall strip it of its tendency to produce confusion and misrule, and as shall thoroughly meet the peculiar exigencies of a new state of society. The thing wanted, in order to the safe accomplishment of the object of the friends of immediate emancipation, is not means, but inclination. Whenever the latter shall exist in the proper quarter, in a degree to outweigh the suggestions of interest or indifference, methods will easily be discovered of adjusting the claims, and allaying the fears of the planter on the one hand; and on the other, of introducing the slave, without risk or inconvenience, to the enjoyment of the blessings of free and civilized society.

Meanwhile, it is for the friends of the planters, and of their oppressed dependents, to persevere in their endeavors to bring about the termination of a state of things not less unnatural, than it is full of hazard to property and life. Nothing but the timely adoption of decided measures in behalf of our slave population can arrest the crisis, to which injustice on the one side, and unmerited wrongs on the other but too surely tend. In vain is it for the advocates of slavery to imagine that their unrighteous reign will always be permitted to last. Already there are symptoms in the colonies of the awaking of that mighty spirit, whose voice none can hear and be a slave—the spirit which gained for Britons, under a less genial sky, the blessings of freedom, of civilization, and of religion, of equal laws and liberal institutions. Chain down that spirit, and its hour of triumph may be delayed, and its vigor may for a *time waste itself in silent* aspirations, or in ineffectual

struggles: but it will not expire. Dark passions spring from its wrongs, and grow up by its side: ei hate, a festering sense of undeserved injury, promp to revenge, together with despair of attaining by la means its end, will goad it on to some lawless, reckl desperate act of wide-spread rebellion, in which planter and his property will perish together, and bond between the colonies and the mother-cou will be snapt as by the convulsive force of an ea quake.

> "Long trains of ill may pass unheeded, dumb:
> But vengeance is behind, and justice is to come."

To arrest the progress of the colonies to a cons mation so terrible, though perhaps, when we rever their history, not inappropriate,—as well as to vindi the eternal principles of right and humanity, are the jects of the friends of immediate emancipation. happy will it be, if the success of their endeavors permitted to anticipate and supersede the lessons dreadful experience.

Up to the period of his death, Dr. Thomson oc pied much of his time in promoting this object, so d to the friends of freedom and humanity. He r almost be said to have expired while pleading its cau a worthy termination to the labors of a life, of wh love to God, issuing in love to man, had been the g erning principle.

For some time before his death, his mind, it is lieved, experienced something of a presentiment of *approaching* event, which may have been vouchsafe *love, to perfect* his preparation for his sudden cha

More than once, when urged by the members of his own family to relieve himself of some portion of the burden of affairs which pressed so heavily on him, he replied with affectionate solemnity, "I must work the work of Him that sent me while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work." The increasing earnestness, richness, and variety of his prayers, both in private and in public, are also circumstances that struck many, and none more than the writer of these pages.

On the 9th of February, 1831, the day on which he died, he appeared to his family in his usual health. As was his custom, he rose and breakfasted at an early hour. During the devotions of the family, which he conducted as usual, he read the last three psalms, and he concluded the service by a prayer remarked at the time for its spirituality and fervor. After baptizing a child, he left his house to pay some visits to the sick; and at a later hour he appeared in his place at a meeting of the presbytery of Edinburgh, specially convened for the purpose of ordaining a minister to one of our West India settlements. During his attendance at the presbytery, he displayed his usual interest, and took his usual share in the business of the court. At the close of the meeting, about five in the afternoon, he proceeded homeward; and with a friend, who met him by the way, he conversed with animation and cheerfulness till he reached his own door, on the threshold of which, without a struggle or a groan, he suddenly fell, overtaken by that summons which recals the "good servant" from his labor to his reward.

In a stroke so sudden, so unexpected, and in all its *circumstances so well calculated* to produce a strong

sensation, the public of Edinburgh, and it may b
ed, of Scotland, testified the liveliest interest.
mourned the loss of a friend, a counsellor, a bro
adversity, a spiritual father. His congregation fe
they had experienced an irreparable bereave
The church of Scotland lamented the removal
of its strongest pillars and most distinguished orna
And the friends of religion in general beheld
death an event, to the consequences of which they
not advert without deep anxiety. The feelings of
were merged in the general grief; and they wh
known him while living, chiefly as a formidable a
nist, hastened to accord to his memory the trib
that affectionate regret, which is usually reserve
tried and valued friends; a fact honorable at on
the departed, and to those by whom the tribut
paid.

Dr. Thomson is interred in a piece of ground
nected with St. Cuthbert's church-yard, divided
by a wall from the spot where lie the remains
venerable friend and father in the church, Sir H
Moncrieff. His funeral was attended by ministers
all parts of the country, by the students of the di
classes, who specially requested permission to a
by the members of his own congregation, and b
better description of persons of all pursuits and de
inations in Edinburgh; while throngs of spec
lined the streets through which the procession pa
testifying by unequivocal signs how sincerely they
took of the feelings of the mourners.

On the following Sabbath (February 20th) a fu
sermon was preached in St. George's church, i

forenoon, by the Rev. Dr. Chalmers, from Hebrews xi. 4.; and another in the afternoon, by the Rev. Dr. Dickson of St. Cuthbert's from Psalm cxii. 6.

Among the many attempts to delineate the character of Dr. Thomson, the following, from the pen of one* who knew him well, and whose habits peculiarly qualify him to do justice to such an effort of friendship, deserves particularly to be preserved. It is inserted in this place as a suitable close to a necessarily imperfect sketch of some of the leading events of Dr. Thomson's life.

"During the excitement caused by the sudden death of a public man, cut down in the prime of life, and in the midst of a career of extensive usefulness, it is easy to pronounce a panegyric, but difficult to delineate a character which shall be free from the exaggeration of existing feeling, and recommend itself to the unbiassed judgment of cool reflection. Rarely has such a deep sensation been produced as by the recent removal of Dr. Thomson; but in few instances, we are persuaded, has there been less reason, on the ground of temporary excitation, for making abatements from the regret and lamentation so loudly and unequivocally expressed. He was so well known, his character and talents were so strongly marked, and they were so much of that description which all classes of men can appreciate, that the circumstances of his death did not create the interest, but only gave expression to that which already existed in the public mind.

* *Dr. M'Crie, the historian of* Knox and of the Reformation.

"Those who saw Dr. Thomson once, knew him; intimacy gave them a deeper insight into his character, but furnished no grounds for altering the opinion which they had at first been led to form. Simplicity—which is an essential element in all minds of superior mould—marked his appearance, his reasoning, his eloquence, and his whole conduct. All that he said or did was direct, straight-forward, and unaffected; there was no laboring for effect, no paltering in a double sense. His talents were such as would have raised him to eminence in any profession or public walk of life which he might have chosen—a vigorous understanding, an active and ardent mind, with powers of close and persevering application. He made himself master in a short time of any subject to which he found it necessary to direct his attention, had all his knowledge at perfect command, expressed himself with the utmost perspicuity, ease, and energy, and when roused by the greatness of his subject, or by the nature of the opposition which he encountered, his bold and masterly eloquence produced an effect, especially on a popular assembly, far beyond that which depends on the sallies of imagination, or the dazzling brilliancy of fancy-work. Nor was he less distinguished for his moral qualities, among which shone conspicuously an honest, firm, unflinching, fearless independence of mind, which prompted him uniformly to adopt and pursue that course which his conscience told him was right, indifferent to personal consequences, and regardless of the frowns and threats of the powerful.

"Besides the instructions of his worthy father, it was *Dr. Thomson's* felicity to enjoy the intimate friendship

of the venerable Sir Henry Moncrieff, who early discovered his rising talents, and freely imparted to him the stores of his own vigorous and matured mind, and of an experience acquired during the long period in which he had taken a leading part in the counsels of the national church. Though Dr. Thomson was known as a popular and able preacher from the time he first entered on the ministry, the powers of his mind were not fully called forth and developed until his appointment to St. George's. He entered on this charge with a deep sense of the importance of the station, as one of the largest parishes of the metropolis, containing a population of the most highly educated class of society, and not without the knowledge that there was in the minds of a part of those among whom he was called to labor, a prepossession against the peculiar doctrines which had always held a prominent place in his public ministrations. But he had not long occupied that pulpit, when, in spite of the delicate situation in which he was placed by more than one public event, which obliged him to give a practical testimony (displeasing to many in high places) in favor of the purity of presbyterian worship, and the independence of the church of Scotland, he disappointed those who had foreboded his ill success, and exceeded the expectations of such of his friends as had the greatest confidence in his talents. By the ability and eloquence of his discourses, by the assiduity and prudence of his more private ministrations, and by the affectionate solicitude which he evinced for the spiritual interests of those committed to his care, he not only dissipated every unfavorable impression, but seated himself *so firmly in the hearts* of his people, that, long

before his lamented death, no clergyman in this city, established or dissenting, was more cordially revered and beloved by his congregation. Nothing endeared him to them so much and so deservedly as the attention he paid to the young and the sick; and of the happy art which he possessed of communicating instruction to the former, and administering advice and consolation to the latter, there are many pleasing, and, it is to be hoped, lasting memorials.

"Dr. Thomson was decidedly evangelical in his doctrinal sentiments, which he did not disguise or hold back in his public discourses; but he was a practical preacher, and instead of indulging in abstruse speculations or philosophical disquisition, made it his grand aim to impress the truths of the gospel on the hearts of his hearers. Attached to the church of Scotland from principle, not from convenience or accident, he made no pretensions to that indiscriminating and spurious liberality which puts all forms of ecclesiastical polity and communion on a level; but in his sentiments and feelings he was liberal in the truest sense of the word; could distinguish between a spirit of sectarianism and conscientious secession; never assumed the airs of a churchman in his intercourse with dissenters, co-operated with them in every good work, and cherished a respect for all faithful ministers, which was founded not only on the principles of toleration and good will, but on the conviction that their labors were useful in supplying that lack of service on the part of his own church, and of counteracting those abuses in her administration, which he never scrupled on any proper occasion to *confess* and deplore.

"It is well known that Dr. Thomson belonged to that party in the Church of Scotland, which has defended the rights of the people in opposition to the rigorous enforcement of the law of patronage; and in advocating this cause in the Church Courts, he has, for many years, displayed his unrivalled talents as a public speaker, sustained by an intrepidity which was unawed by power, and a fortitude which was proof against overwhelming majorities. Of late years he has devoted a great portion of his labors to the defence of the pure circulation of the Scriptures, and the emancipation of the degraded negroes in the West Indies; and, in both causes, he has displayed his characteristic ability, zeal for truth, and uncompromising and indignant reprobation of every species of dishonesty, injustice, and oppression. His exertions in behalf of the doctrines and standards of the church, against some recent heresies and delusions, afford an additional proof, not only of his unwearied zeal in behalf of that sacred cause to which he devoted all his energies, but of his readiness, at all times, to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once delivered to the saints."

"Great as Dr. Thomson's popularity was, (and few men in his sphere of life ever rose so high in popular favor,) he was not exposed to the woe denounced against those "of whom all men speak well." He had his detractors and enemies, who waited for his halting, and were prepared to magnify and blazon his faults. Of him it may be said, as of another Christian patriot, no man ever loved or hated him moderately. This was the inevitable consequence of his great talents, and the rough *contests in which* he was involved. His gen-

erous spirit raised him above the indulgence of en and every jealous feeling, but it made him less tolera of those who displayed these mean vices. When co vinced of the justice of a cause, and satisfied of its ma nitude, he threw his whole soul into it, summoned his powers to its defence, and assailed its adversaries, n only with strong arguments, but with sharp, pointe and poignant sarcasm; but unless he perceived insi cerity, malignity, or perverseness, his own feelings we too acute and too just to permit him gratuitously wound those of others. That his zeal was alwa reined by prudence; that his ardor of mind never hu ried him to a precipitate conclusion, or led him to ma nify the subject in debate; that his mind was nev warped by party feeling; and that he never indulge the love of victory, or sought to humble a teazing pragmatic adversary, are positions which his true frien will not maintain. But his ablest opponents will adm that in all the great questions in which he distinguishe himself, he acted conscientiously; that he was an ope manly, and honorable adversary; and that, though h was sometimes intemperate, he was never disingen ous. Dr. Thomson was by constitution a reforme he felt a strong sympathy with those great men who, a former age, won renown, by assailing the hydra error, and of civil and religious tyranny; and his cha acter partook of theirs. In particular, he bore n inconsiderable resemblance to Luther, both in exce lencies and defects—his leonine nobleness and potenc his masculine eloquence, his facetiousness and plea antry, the fondness which he shewed for the fascinatin *charms of music*, and the irritability and vehemenc

which he occasionally exhibited, to which some will add the necessity which this imposed on him to make retractions, which, while they threw a partial shade over his fame, taught his admirers the needful lesson, that he was a man subject to like passions and infirmities with others. But the fact is, though hitherto known to few, and the time is now come for revealing it, that some of those effusions which were most objectionable, and exposed him to the greatest obloquy, were neither composed by Dr. Thomson, nor seen by him, until they were published to the world; and that in one instance, which has given rise to the most unsparing abuse, he paid the expenses of a prosecution, and submitted to make a public apology, for an offence of which he was innocent as the child unborn, rather than give up the name of the friend who was morally responsible for the deed;—an example of generous self-devotion which has few parallels.

"To his other talents, Dr. Thomson added a singular capacity for business, which not only qualified him for taking an active part in the Church Courts, but rendered him highly useful to those public charities of which the clergy of Edinburgh are officially managers, and to the different voluntary societies with which he was connected. This caused unceasing demands on his time and exertions, which, joined to his other labors, were sufficient to wear out the most robust constitution, and he at last sunk under their weight.

"In private life, Dr. Thomson was every thing that is amiable and engaging. He was mild, and gentle, and cheerful;—deeply tender and acutely sensitive in his *strongest affections; most* faithful and true in his

attachments of friendship—kindhearted and indulgent to all with whom he had intercourse. His firm adherence to principle, when he thought principle involved, whatever appearance of severity it may have presented to those who saw him only as a public character, had no taint of harshness in his private life; and unbending as he certainly was in principle, he never failed to receive with kindness what was addressed to his reason in the spirit of friendship. It may indeed be said with truth, that, great as were his public merits, and deplorable the public loss in his death, yet to those who had the happiness to live with him in habits of intimacy, the deepest and the bitterest feeling still is, the separation from a man who possessed so many of the finest and most amiable sensibilities of the human heart. It was around his own family hearth, and in the circle of his intimate acquaintances, that Dr. Thomson was peculiarly delightful. In him the lion and the lamb may be said to have met together. It was equally natural in him to play with a child, and to enter the lists with a practised polemic. He could be gay without levity, and grave without moroseness. His frank and bland manners, the equable flow of his cheerfulness and good humor, and the information which he possessed on almost every subject, made his company to be courted by persons of all classes. He could mix with men of the world without compromising his principles, or lowering his character as a minister of the gospel; and his presence was enough to repress any thing which had the semblance of irreligion.

"The loss of such a man, and at such a time, is *incalculable*. His example and spirit had a wholesome

and refreshing, an exhilarating and elevating influence, on the society in which he moved; and even the agitation which he produced when he was in his stormy moods, was salutary,—like the hurricane, (his own favorite image, and the last which he employed in public,) purifying the moral atmosphere, and freeing it from the selfishness and duplicity, and time-serving, with which it was over-charged."

The following is a list of Dr. Thomson's publications.

Catechism on the Nature and Uses of the Lord's Supper, 18mo.—Address to Christian Parents on the Religious Education of their Children, 18mo.—The Young Warned against the Enticement of Sinners, 18mo.—Lectures on Select Portions of Scripture, 12mo.—The Sin and Danger of being "Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God," 18mo.—Sermons on Infidelity, post 8vo.—Catechism for Young Persons, 18mo.—Sermons on Hearing the Word Preached, 18mo.—Lectures on Select Portions of the Psalms, post 8vo.—Sermons on Various Subjects, 8vo.—Sermons on the Doctrine of Universal Pardon, 12mo.—Besides occasional Sermons, Pamphlets, and School-Books; and his contributions to the Edinburgh Encyclopædia, the Religious Monitor, and the Christian Instructor.

SERMONS.

SERMON I.*

SALVATION BY GRACE.

EPHESIANS ii. 8.

For by grace are ye saved, through faith.

If there be one truth more distinctly stated than another in the Bible, it is the truth contained in our text—that salvation flows entirely from divine grace, without any merit on the part of the sinner to deserve it, and without any ability on his part to accomplish it. This truth is interwoven with every part of the gospel scheme. It stands forth as a leading declaration in the gospel record,—and it is that which gives to the gospel, as a message from God to our fallen race, all its meaning and consistency, all its value and all its effect.

It is a truth, indeed, which does not find a ready access into the human mind; and even when it *is* received, that reception is not always so cordial and unreserved as

* Preached at the introduction of the Rev. John W. Thomson, to the church and parish of *Monedie, 10th August*, 1828.

it might be expected to be. We are unwilling to have our lofty imaginations brought down, to confess our ignorance, our unworthiness, our insufficiency,—to accede to a plan which proceeds upon the mortifying supposition, that we can do nothing efficiently for ourselves, and must have every thing done for us by the aid and intervention of another. We have pride of understanding, and think ourselves competent to the formation of a scheme, which might at least contribute to our salvation, if it could not altogether effectuate that object. We have pride of heart, and will not acknowledge that moral depravity and guilt which at once render salvation necessary, and incapacitate us for working it out by our own ability. In short, we cannot bear to believe that, amidst all our fancied attainments and all our seeming excellencies, there is nothing truly deserving in us,—to lie down, under a sense of our utter nothingness, in the dust of deep and unfeigned humility, and to be indebted to foreign aid exclusively, for all our blessings and for all our hopes. And yet, not only must this high-mindedness be subdued, in order that we may be saved, but there is not a position more susceptible of proof than this, —that our salvation is wholly of grace. Men may reject it, from indifference to all the subjects to which it relates. They may treat it with ridicule and scorn, from misunderstanding its import, or from wantonness of disposition. Or they may deny it, by appealing to principles and modes of reasoning which acknowledge not the authority of revelation. But it will be found to commend itself at once to our judgment, our belief, and our submission, if we will only consent to take our views from that sacred volume, which alone assures us that there is salvation;—which tells us in what it consists,—which urges us to seek it, and which promises that, seeking it as it is offered to us, it will certainly become ours.

It is to the illustration of this truth that we mean at present to direct your attention.

Now what is the representation which the Scriptures give us of our spiritual condition? They declare that man is guilty. But do they ever insinuate that he has wherewithal to atone for his guilt, or that he can do any thing to establish a claim to the pardon and absolution that he needs? They assert that he is ignorant. But do they assert, that by any exertion of his intellectual faculties, he can discover the way of reconciliation and eternal life? They hold him out as in a state of inherent corruption. But is it their doctrine that he has also inherent power to change his heart, and to become the partaker of a divine nature? They represent him as led captive by Satan at his will. But do they, anywhere, ascribe to him either the wisdom or the energy, that is requisite to baffle and overcome this arch-enemy of his soul? They describe him as exposed to numerous difficulties and temptations. But do they give him the least encouragement to think that, if left to himself, he could succeed in struggling through the one, or in resisting the other? No, indeed, my friends, you cannot have read the Scriptures, however superficially, without perceiving, that all these questions must be answered in the negative. The Scriptures, indeed, give a most melancholy and affecting picture of man's fallen condition, but the most melancholy and affecting part of it is, that he cannot by any efforts of his own deliver himself from the ruin in which he is involved,—that in this view his wisdom is but folly, his strength weakness, his righteousness filthy rags, and that, if no interposition had taken place in his behalf, he must have inevitably and for ever perished. Accordingly, we are told that "Christ came to seek and to save that which was lost." As sinners we were "far off, having no hope and without God in the world." And we were "without strength, when Christ died for the ungodly." These, and various other passages of holy writ, demonstrate, that man as a sinner, if abandoned to his own resources, is utterly helpless and undone. And while they explicitly state his total inability *to save himself, they* as explicitly ascribe his

salvation to the grace of God, and to no other source. "God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son that we might live through him." "Ye are justified freely by the grace of God." "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy hath he saved us." "Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord." "By grace are ye saved." And, besides a multitude of Scriptures to the same effect, we see from the whole strain and constitution of the gospel, that it is a scheme of mercy free and undeserved, for the benefit of creatures who have both forfeited all title to the divine favor, and are wholly destitute of the means of regaining it, and that the tidings which it brings are good tidings, which neither would nor could have proceeded from any other source than the compassion of him, who though a just God is yet a Saviour, and who, in the character of a Savior, is rich in mercy and plenteous in redemption.

But while it is the grace of God which has thus brought salvation to the world at all, it is the grace of God also which has brought salvation to us, proclaimed it to us, and placed it within our reach. There are multitudes of our fellow-creatures who have never heard of a Saviour—who are still ignorant of the true God, and of Jesus Christ whom he has sent—who are living in all the abominations of pagan idolatry, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise. But it is not so with us. Unto us the word of salvation has been sent; upon our dwellings the light of divine revelations has been made to shine; into our hands has been put the record which God has given of his son whom he has sent to save sinners; and there have been distinctly unfolded to our view the way of eternal life, and the means by which we may be enabled to walk in it. Now, what is it that has thus made us to differ? what is it that has secured for us that superiority, in point of external privilege, which we enjoy over the myriads of human beings who *dwell in the* dark places of the earth? Were we possessed

of any previous claims to the favor of the Almighty, which would have made it injustice to leave us in a state of spiritual darkness, and hopeless degeneracy? was it possible for us to have done any thing to merit such a high distinction as that to which we have been raised by the knowledge of christianity? Or shall we attribute it to mere chance, which equally excludes the interposition of God and the desert of man? No, my friends, in none of these things do we find an adequate cause, for that distinguishing privilege which we enjoy, in consequence of having the dispensation of the gospel communicated to us. We are to seek for it in the sovereign grace of him, in whom the plan of human salvation originated, and who alone could, subsequently, determine to whom it should be made known, and from whom it should be withheld. We cannot tell why it has been kept back from such a large proportion of our race, The reason has not been revealed to us; and we have no means of discovering it. Perhaps in this, as in many other cases, it becomes us to look up to God and say, "Even so Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight." But whatever explanation may be given or conjectured, it is obvious that, so far as we are concerned, it is the divine favor, neither deserved nor solicited by us, that has blessed our lot with the light and mercy of the gospel.

And it is to be observed, still more particularly, that it is by the operation of divine grace, that the salvation of the gospel is brought to us individually and effectually. We are all permitted to hear its joyful sound; but it is a mournful fact that we do not all listen to it, and do not all obey it. Among the multitude to whom its message is conveyed, there are some only who give a cordial welcome to it, and embrace the deliverance which it offers, and comply with the terms which it prescribes. This is a matter of undeniable fact: but it is no less true, that if we be among the number, we must ascribe our happy situation to the influences of that grace without which we can do nothing. Looking to

the powers of the understanding, and the dispositions of the heart, and the circumstances of the outward condition, as these are delineated in Scripture, and experienced in the case of the natural man, we may well ask, "Can these dry bones live?" And the only answer that can be given, is, that they cannot live, unless the spirit of God breathe upon them. In our personal character there is neither power to effectuate, nor merit to procure, that redemption from sin, that restoration to the hope of heaven, and that change in the moral constitution of our nature, which are denied to those of our fellow creatures who are around us and among us—living in the same neighborhood, associating under the same roof, and receiving the same instruction. We must search somewhere else for the cause of such a peculiar phenomenon. And it is the doctrine of Scripture, that it is God himself who begins the good work in us, and carries it on, and brings it ultimately to perfection. This is effected, indeed, in a manner corresponding with the rational nature which he has given us. Our understanding is convinced by sufficient reasons; and our will is moved by suitable motives; and we act upon principles and exercise affections which have the full approbation and concurrence of our own minds. But still the necessities of our spiritual condition require, and the scheme of the gospel has provided, that the whole should be under the awakening, guiding, constraining, over-ruling influence of divine grace. It is grace which—whatever be the instrument or medium employed—first brings us from darkness into light, and from the power of Satan unto God—which enlightens us, and renews us, and makes us a peculiar and an obedient people. If we have faith to embrace the Saviour, this faith is wrought in us, and is the gift of God. If we have repented, that our sins may be blotted out, this repentance is given to us, as well as the remission with which it is accompanied. If we are taught to love God, this love is shed abroad in our hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost. In short, if *there* be any thing good in our spiritual frame, and

if there be any thing valuable in our Christian experience—and if any change has been effected in our character or our condition as accountable beings—if we are living in any measure as the children of God, cultivating their temper, and enjoying their privileges—and if we can appropriate to ourselves any of the promises of the gospel, or any of the blessings of salvation, the sentiment which we hold, and the language we employ, must be that of the apostle, when he said "It is by the grace of God that I am what I am." Yes! my Christian friends, if the grace of God had not brought you salvation, you must have been still in your sins, and in your sins you must have perished. As it was in that grace, that the economy of redemption took its rise, so it is by the same grace that you have not only been made acquainted with it, but led also to acquiesce in it—that you have been persuaded to accept of him who is mighty to save—that you are conducted along the path of righteousness—that you are cheered, and upheld, and animated amid your manifold trials—that you are enabled to rejoice in the hope of glory. And at every step you take in the sacred and heavenward pilgrimage through which you are passing, you have reason to stand still that you may not only see the salvation of the Lord your God, but exclaim with the mingled feelings of humility and gratitude, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy great name be all the praise."

It is true, my friends, we speak of the merits of Christ as procuring our salvation: and some may be inclined to think, that such a position is not altogether consistent with the statement, that our salvation is wholly of grace. The inconsistency, however, is merely ideal. Christ certainly did fulfil the law in our stead—he finished transgression, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in an everlasting righteousness. But then you will observe that all this—the thing which he did—his manner of doing it—and the success which crowned his labors—all this was the gracious appointment of God. It is not the right scriptural statement

that Christ stepped forward, and by a work of mere spontaneous suffering and obedience, asserted for sinners a title to that which God was not already inclined, or had not already determined to bestow. He came from God, to execute a plan which God had devised in the counsels of eternity: it was by God that he was qualified for the great undertaking; and by him was the work accepted, because it was both the result of his own ordination, and performed according to the decision and direction of his own will. And the satisfaction which Christ offered to the divine justice, was nothing more than a necessary measure for attaining the purposes of the divine love—a step which it was requisite for mercy to take in its glorious march towards the salvation of perishing sinners. It is far from being essential to the free grace of God, that in its manifestation no attention should be paid to his other attributes. On the contrary, the glory of each of his perfections is concerned in the harmonious exercise of them all. And, accordingly, the obedience of Christ was appointed, in order that his holiness and justice might be fully vindicated, while his pity operated for the pardon and redemption of rebellious men. But then this was his own appointment: it was an expression of his grace, and you may judge of the extent of that grace which it exhibited, when you remember that for our deliverance from guilt and ruin, he did not spare even his own Son, but sent him into the world that he might be made under the law, and pour out his soul an offering for sin. This arrangement, while it secures the authority of God's government and the glory of his character, as well as accomplishes the salvation of his fallen offspring, does at the same time magnify his grace much more than if our iniquities had been blotted out, and our restoration effected, by his simple and almighty volition. And therefore it is, that the Scriptures, when speaking with peculiar emphasis and rapture of the love of God, refer to the mission, and incarnation, and death of Christ, as its greatest and most overpowering manifestation.

It is also true that we speak of your being justified and saved through faith. And no doubt it is the plain doctrine of Scripture, that without this principle we can have no well-grounded hope of obtaining forgiveness and acceptance. But, then, what is this faith? Not only is it a gift of God—one of the fruits of his Holy Spirit—wrought in us, and maintained in us, not by *our own*, but by *his* energy—it is, moreover, that very exercise of the mind which refers the whole of our redemption to the love of God, as manifested in Jesus Christ. It does not, and it cannot, merit redemption. It has no efficient virtue in its own nature. It has no more good desert in it than any other quality which belongs to the renewed mind. It is the appointed means of our becoming experimentally interested in the Saviour, who is offered to us. It implies a renunciation of all dependence upon any thing in ourselves. It is a fixing of our dependence upon Him who has been set forth as a propitiation for our sins. And that propitiation having been instituted solely by the divine mercy, faith can be considered as nothing more than trust in that mercy as the only ground on which we expect to be saved—as the only source from which proceed to us all the blessings of the gospel. It is in this sense that we are said to be "justified by faith." It is in this sense also that we are said to be "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus." And it is in this sense, finally, that we are said to be "chosen to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth."

It is also true that we insist upon the necessity of personal righteousness in those who shall be finally saved. But neither is this incompatible with the doctrine of free grace, as stated in my text. Holiness and happiness are, in their own relative nature and in the divine ordinance, inseparably connected—so that unless you be possessed of the one, you cannot be restored to the other. You cannot be happy, unless you be qualified for the enjoyment of that which constitutes happiness; and this *qualification consists in* being holy. Holiness,

therefore, is declared in Scripture to be indispensably requisite. But then this very holiness is to be considered as a part of the salvation which is wrought out for you by the grace of God. In the exercise of grace to which you had no rightful claim, he sent his Son to redeem you from your iniquities, and purify you as a peculiar people, and to make you zealous of good works. It is in the exercise of grace that he communicates to you the Holy Spirit, for the very purpose of sanctifying your souls. It is in the exercise of grace that he has established those sacred ordinances which go to improve your mind and character, that he puts it into your heart to embrace the ever-recurring opportunities of engaging in them, and that he blesses these effectually for your good. It is in the exercise of grace that he overrules the dispensations of his providence for teaching you lessons of spiritual wisdom, and training you to habits of piety and heavenly mindedness. And whereas, even in your seasons of holiest resolution and most devoted zeal, and in the most favorable circumstances in which you can be placed, you are unable of yourselves to resist temptation, and to perform your duty, and to continue steadfast in the path of obedience, his grace is given that it may be sufficient for you, and his strength is perfected in your weakness. So that in this part of the arrangement also, salvation is wholly of the grace of God. He not only restores you to the hope of eternal life, when he might have left you to perish, but he produces in you that holy meetness for its exercises and its joys which you could never have produced in yourselves, and without which it never could possibly have been yours.

In every point of view, therefore, it is by grace that ye are saved. It was the grace of God which provided salvation for the fallen race of Adam. It was his grace that made you acquainted with it, and brought it within your reach. It is by his grace that you are effectually persuaded to embrace it, and prepared for that eternal blessedness in which it terminates. And even in those *circumstances* which at first sight may be thought to

modify, and to limit its freeness and its fulness, we can trace not only additional proofs of its existence, but the most gratifying illustrations of its tenderness, its riches, and its all-sufficiency.

1. To those of you, my friends, in whose personal experience the remarks now made find a counterpart and an echo, I need scarcely say that the subject should inspire you with gratitude. You know what it is to be afar off, and what it is to be brought nigh—you know the value of that salvation in which you rejoice, and you know that it all emanates from the grace of that God whom you had done every thing to offend, and could do nothing to conciliate; and knowing these things, and feeling them too, gratitude must be a sentiment of prevailing and habitual exercise in your minds; you must be conscious that it cannot be too deeply cherished or too strongly expressed; you must lament, that it is so disproportionate in its warmth and in its constancy, and in its practical influence to the riches of that saving grace of God, for which it is so justly due. That you may be grateful as you ought to be, meditate much, and meditate often ou this great truth, that all your safety, all your blessings, all your expectations, all that is precious to you in time and in eternity, comes from that source alone. And, especially, let your souls rise in liveliest and devoutest fervor to the merciful Being by whose grace ye are saved, when you think of that sacrifice of his own Son in which you are called to behold at once the reality of his love, its exclusive operation in redeeming you, the vastness of its extent as exhibited in the costliness of its display, and the wisdom, and the efficacy of those means by which it has secured for you the salvation which it so liberally bestows. Let your souls magnify the Lord, and let your spirits rejoice in God your Savior.

In those moments of sacred retirement, when you hold communion with the Father of your spirits and the author of your salvation—and while on the family altar, you present to him your *morning* and your evening sacrifices—*and while in the tab*ernacles of his house, you

unite with the congregations of his people in offering to him the tribute of adoration and praise—and while you converse with one another in the house, or in the field, or by the way, of the beauties of his character, and of the greatness of your privileges and your hopes,—forget not to acknowledge and to celebrate the magnitude and the liberality of that mercy which he has shed upon your spiritual lot, and with which he has brightened your eternal prospects. And though the infidel is disbelieving it all, and the profligate is scoffing at it all, and the worldling is neglecting and despising it all,—let the contemplation of it elevate your minds with emotions of wonder and delight—let your experience of its inestimable value kindle in your heart the ardors of reciprocal and devoted affection—let it be the song of your pilgrimage, whose path it enriches with its bounteous gifts, and whose darkest passages it cheers with its great and precious promises—and in the thanksgiving of every day and of every hour, let there be a preparation for enjoying the Halleluiahs of that rapturous and everlasting anthem which all the redeemed from the earth shall sing in that blessed abode which mercy has provided for them, "Unto him that loved us and washed us from our sins, in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God even his father—unto him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen."

2. The subject we have been considering should teach you humility. Were you permitted to think that any part of your salvation, however inconsiderable, was merited or wrought out by yourselves, this thought would generate self-complacency; and from the natural tendency of the heart, your own share in the work will be so dwelt and doated upon, that even the far larger part of it, which you could not but ascribe to divine influence and interposition, would frequently be forgotten, and always undervalued; and thus, though unworthy creatures, you would be high minded and proud, and give place to that passion, which, of all *others, is* most hateful to the sovereign God. But the

scriptural view of salvation, which we have been attempting to illustrate, excludes all boasting, by taking away all ground and all pretence for it. All that is good in you proceeds from the Father of mercies: nothing that is good is either produced or nourished by your own independent energies. Whatever you have, therefore, of excellence, or of privilege, or of happiness—whether it be much or little, reads you a lesson of humility: if a vain-glorious emotion at any time rise in your breast, it is an intruder, and must be expelled, for it is settled, that you possess not one quality to warrant or to countenance it: and as thus when you give the glory that is due to the grace of God by which alone ye are saved, you leave nothing in your own character but weakness, imperfection, ignorance, guilt and misery, it must be that self-abasement shall take possession of your minds, that you shall lie low in dust and ashes before Him whose fallen, disobedient, helpless creatures you are, and that he shall see in you that subdued tone of thinking and feeling, that freedom from all pretensions to worth and power, that genuine poverty of spirit, which will be the signal for communications of his promised grace, and make you fit, because willing and eager recipients of that undeserved bounty which he is so ready to pour out upon his redeemed and penitent offspring. Cherish fondly, then, the doctrine of salvation by free grace; it will make and keep you humble, which is at all times and in all cases, your appropriate attitude in the presence of God; and while it is thus becoming, it will also prove advantageous, by leading you, in the exercise of that humility which it inculcates, to seek for the blessings which you need, where alone they are ever to be found, in the rich and inexhaustible storehouse of his own sovereign mercy. And let your humility be deepened by a frequent contemplation of the Redeemer's death. That death is a most affecting demonstration of your helpless and undone condition by nature, and by wicked works, as well of the riches *of that grace* which interposed in your

behalf—because if you had not been without all merit, and without all resource, it cannot be supposed that God would have given up his own dear Son to the shame and agony of the cross. Measure the depth of your own worthlessness, by the depth of Christ's humiliation. And give all your vain and lofty imaginations to the winds. Prostrate yourselves in your inmost spirit before the footstool of your God. And in that attitude, wait, and watch, and pray for that grace and more abundant communications of that grace of His, which alone can pardon, and purify, and exalt, and save you.

3. This view of the doctrine of salvation by free grace also imparts comfort. It imparts comfort, not merely because while you are sinners you have a merciful God to look to and to deal with, but also because the merciful God takes the whole charge and management of your salvation. Just suppose that any part of it were under your own direction—that you had something to do either in the formation, or in the execution of its plan—that certain points in your treatment of it, or in its application to you, had been intrusted to your care—would not this have made room for failure, either partial or total, and consequently, for distrust and fearful apprehension? But knowing as you do, that the ignorance, the feebleness, the perversity, the corruption of fallen man, have had no share either in devising or in accomplishing it—though the cure and removal of these evils are the very objects at which it aims—and knowing, moreover, that the whole of it, from first to last, is the doing of the Lord, to whom no imperfection cleaves, and to whom no attribute is wanting—all fearfulness as to the result is out of place, and there is the greatest encouragement to believe that it will prove as certain, as it promises to be great and happy. The grace of God is such as to sustain the best and brightest hopes that fallen man can entertain. It is *rich,* tender, abundant, and everlasting. There is no *evil that it* will not remove, there is no blessing that it

will not confer. It delights in the salvation of those on whom it fixes its regards and sheds its influence: and will withhold from them nothing that is good. And then it is united in its exercise with every other perfection that inheres in Deity. Its purposes are devised and executed in conjunction with a wisdom which errs not—a power which nothing can resist—a knowledge which embraces all the wants and all the circumstances of its objects—a justice which being satisfied by the surety will not demand satisfaction from the sinner—and a faithfulness which will perform every promise that has been made, and will not leave the least and the poorest of those about whom it is concerned, till they are safely lodged in the mansions of the blessed. And surely, my Christian friends, you have in this a consolation which you never could have possessed, had any portion of the scheme of your salvation been committed to yourselves, or to the best, and the wisest, and the most perfect of created beings. The consolation is rich, and precious, and free from all admixture. Take it then and enjoy it in all its fulness. Amidst the many vicissitudes of your Christian lot—amidst the darkness that will sometimes envelope you—the convictions of sin, and the sense of weakness, and perversity that will often distress you—the temptations and the hostilities that will occasionally threaten to overwhelm you—the difficulties in performing your duty, and in holding fast your integrity, which will frequently embarrass and perplex you—the misgivings of mind, and the pressure of outward affliction which cannot fail to visit you—the various hardships of life, and the awful approach of death which necessarily await you—amidst all these trials, and even when every thing seems to wear a forbidding and a frightful aspect, let this be your refuge, that by grace ye are saved—that you are in the hands of God—that he is keeping you as the apple of his eye—that no event can frustrate the purposes of his love concerning you—that he will make all things, even the worst and severest dispensations with which you can be overtaken,

work together for the advancement of your spiritual good, and of your eternal felicity. And that you may be prepared for taking this consolation along with you as you travel through the wilderness, and that your joy may be full on account of it, even to overflowing, open your hearts continually to the impression of the dying of the Lord Jesus. It was the grace of God that appointed that method of redemption. Wondrous, indeed, must that grace have been which prompted him to make such a sacrifice in order to save you. Trust in it now and be comforted—trust in it forever, and be forever happy. Take this argument along with you. "If God spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things"—all things that can contribute to your present safety, and secure your entrance to the promised land. Take this argument along with you, and rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory.

4. The subject we have been considering should constrain us to cheerful and universal obedience. If the grace of God has been so richly displayed towards you, unquestionably it becomes you to be most anxious and diligent in doing what is well pleasing to him. Remember, besides, that one essential branch of that salvation which the grace of God has wrought out for you, is the sanctification of your heart and life, so that if you indulge in sin or be careless in duty, you are doing what you can to counteract and frustrate the great purpose which in his mercy he offers to accomplish upon your spiritual and eternal condition. And, then, you have this most powerful of all motives and considerations to influence you to activity, and devotedness, and perseverance in the path of righteousness, that the same grace which has promised and provided salvation, will be imparted in adequate and abundant supply, to purify your hearts, to regulate your conduct, to fortify you against temptation, and to enable you to perfect holiness *in* the fear of God. Be resolved, then, not only to be *holy, but to be* holy in all manner of conversation—to

consecrate yourselves to the service of Him who has loved you—to walk closely, and constantly, and obediently with God—and to live in this manner, to "the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made you accepted in the Beloved." And let your resolution to act thus, as those who have "tasted that the Lord is gracious," be strengthened and confirmed by the death of Christ. For, while Christ died to fulfil the purpose of God's mercy respecting your salvation, you have in this fact, a proof solemn and affecting, at once of the greatness of that mercy, of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and of the necessity of personal purity, so that you cannot rightly meditate on the death of Christ without feeling that your obligations to be holy, are powerful and constraining. Bear these then upon your minds: strive to fulfil them faithfully and fully. And in every part of your future conduct, show that you are not only admirers but partakers of the grace of God, that to his grace you sincerely ascribe all the honors of your salvation, and that, depending upon the grace by which ye are saved, for strength as well as for righteousness, you will study to obey God, by being conformed to the image of Christ, "in whom ye have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

A single word to those who reject the salvation of the gospel, and despise the free grace by which it is provided. Remember that though the grace of God has had its perfect work, his justice is still entire to punish those who rebel, and persist in their rebellion. And to trample and set at nought his grace must tend only to aggravate the offence by which his justice is already roused, and to increase the punishment which it has already denounced. And though the grace of God by which sinners are saved, is exceeding rich, there may be a period, though unknown to us, beyond which it will not extend; and if you are obstinately withstanding its kind and melting invitations, it may cease to wait for you, and at length abandon you to

hopeless and final impenitence. O then, be persuaded to surrender yourselves to its saving power, and to give yourselves to the God by whom it is manifested! "Turn ye, turn ye, for why will ye die."

There are some of you, I fear, whose limbs are trembling, or whose heads are hoary with age, and to whom one pastor after another has addressed the message of salvation by free grace, but to whom that message has been addressed in vain, and who are continuing to live as if there were no justice to punish you for your guilt, or as if there were no grace to redeem you from it. Once more I bring this message to you, and beseech you to listen to it, before your feet stumble on the dark mountains, and death approaches to put his seal upon your everlasting fate. Long have you been wandering away from God, mocking at his judgments, and despising the compassionate counsels which he has given you in his word and sent you by his servants. And if you persist in this thoughtless and stouthearted course, you may never again hear a warning to flee from the wrath to come, and it is but a short and passing hour when you must go into that place where God has forgotten to be gracious, and where his mercy is clean gone forever. But, if you will allow yourselves to be persuaded, and even at this latest hour, will repent, and believe, and obey, the gospel, long and obstinately as you have been fighting against the authority of God, and resisting the calls of his pity, I am warranted to assure you of acceptance and salvation, because the blood of atonement, on which he beseeches you to rely, cleanses from all sin, and his mercy reaches far enough to embrace even the chief of sinners. O then be reconciled to him by the death of his Son. Cast yourselves upon his unmerited, but never-failing love. Lay hold of salvation as his free gift. And let his redeeming grace be your confidence and your rejoicing and your hope during the short evening of your pilgrimage, that it may bear you comfortably through *the agonies of* your departure, and carry you away as

trophies of its riches and its power, to the glories of a better world.

And if you are young and healthful, yet count not upon the years and the opportunities of a lengthened life. At whatever time you are saved, it must be by grace. And if the grace of God is now bringing you salvation, and offering it to you, and pressing it upon you, why will you delay accepting of this salvation, as if it were not at this moment as valuable and as necessary as it ever can be at any future period? The longer you defer embracing it, the more hardened will you become against the influences of that grace which confers and applies it, and the more difficult will it be to prevail upon your hearts to renounce the sins which now prevent you from receiving it, and to acquiesce in the method by which alone you can become the happy partakers of it. And then what security have you that you will be spared till that chosen hour when, perhaps, you are determined that you will seek for its blessings, and never desist from the pursuit till they become yours? You *have*, you *can have* no such security. Sickness of body, insanity of mind, sudden and unexpected death may come upon you, and eternally shut out the hope of making one effort even of reliance upon that grace of God, by which alone you can be saved, or of ever again hearing the doctrine which we have been urging on your reception. "*Now* is the accepted time—*now* is the day of salvation"—listen to the voice of God *to-day*, and harden not your hearts. Let not another sun go down upon your impenitence and unbelief. Be resolved that you will be the Lord's—that you will cleave to him as your Saviour, your guide, your portion, and your all. And thus surrendering yourselves to him in early life, he will make goodness and mercy to follow you all your days—at whatever hour he calls you away, the arms of his kindness will be underneath you and round about you—and as he has given you grace here, he will give you glory hereafter.

Let me beseech you all to think of the privileges you enjoy, and of the account you are to render; and let me especially remind *you* who belong to this parish, of the new relation into which you have been lately brought, and of the responsibility connected with it. No relation can be more important—no responsibility can be more awful. My young friend, to whom, as a pastor in the church of Christ, your spiritual interests have been committed, will deceive and disappoint me much, if he do not preach to you faithfully and earnestly the sovereign grace of God—the unsearchable riches of Christ—the doctrine of salvation by divine mercy through faith in a crucified Redeemer—and the necessity of holiness as produced by the renewing and sanctifying influences of the Spirit, and as extending to all the affections of the heart, and to all the actions of the life. I feel confident that he will devote himself to the sacred and momentous work which has been given him to do—that he will cheerfully spend and be spent in the service of his Divine Master—that he will be instant, agreeably to the apostle's exhortation, in season and out of season—that he will, with all anxiety, administer instruction, and warning, and reproof, and encouragement, and consolation, according to the various characters and circumstances of his people—that in all these things he will watch for your souls as one that must give an account, and as one that loves you for Christ's sake and for your own. I trust that, feeling the weight of those obligations under which he has come as a minister of the Son of God, and as your watchman and overseer in the Lord, he will make it the business of his life—not an occasional or subordinate work, but his grand and paramount object, in which his whole affections are engaged, and to which his whole energies are consecrated—to awaken perishing sinners from the sleep of spiritual death, to comfort them that are mourning in Sion, to build up the saints in their most holy faith, and to prepare inhabitants for the mansions that are in his *Father's house* above. And I pray that whatever dif-

ficulties and trials he may have to encounter in the arduous office upon which he has entered, he may be enabled, through the help that cometh from on high, to sustain and to overcome them all; that whatever he may have to suffer from gainsayers, he will not cease to love you, and to pray for you, and to labor in your behalf; that "none of these things will move him," and that he will not "count even his life dear to him, so that he may finish his course with joy, and the ministry which he has received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

But think not, my friends, that all the duty and all the accountability attach to *him*. If it be *his* duty to preach to you the doctrines of grace and of godliness, and to strive for your conversion, and salvation, and happiness, it is *your* duty to receive his doctrines in the faith and the obedience of them, to listen to his voice as he calls you to glory and to virtue, to become all that the gospel, whose message he delivers, is intended to make you, and to show in your practical subjection to the righteousness and authority of Christ, that you have not received the grace of God in vain. And if he must give an account of himself and of his stewardship to the great Master of that vineyard, in a corner of which he has been appointed to work, so must each of you, whether old or young, whether rich or poor, whether in one relation or in another—every one of you must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to answer for the spirit and the manner in which you have received his servant, for the value which you have put upon the redemption that your pastor offers you and presses upon you in his Master's name, for the improvement that you have made of all the undeserved benefits which, through the ministry of the gospel, have been urged upon your reception by all the terrors of the Lord, and by all the compassions of him who died for you.

And O, will you reject the provision which God's grace has made for the life, and the nourishment, and the felicity *of your never-dying* spirits? Or, will you

take no deep-felt interest in the scheme of everlasting salvation, which was devised in the eternal counsels of the Godhead—which was purchased with a price that it mocked the riches of a universe to pay—which prophets and apostles, and evangelists and pastors, have been ordained to promulgate and administer to a guilty world—and which, with a fulness of blessing that imagination cannot fathom, comes as a suppliant to your very door, and knocks for admittance into your very heart? Or will you banish from your view, or will you lightly esteem that period of coming retribution, at which God will reckon with each one of you for the reception you have given to a preached gospel and an offered Saviour—when he who now beseeches you by the agonies of his cross to be reconciled, will sit upon the throne of righteous judgment to award your never-ending doom, and when assembled myriads will be looking on to see you taking your place on the right hand or on the left hand of the great white throne, and listening to the voice which, louder than a thousand thunders, and irresistible as omnipotence, sends you to heaven or to hell? No, my dear friends, I trust that none of you is thus insensible to what so deeply and so necessarily concerns you, *now* and *forever*. Settle it in your minds at this moment; vow it in your inmost soul; let that sun which now looks upon you, as an emblem of him who called himself the light of the world, witness the engagement which you make; let the God whose eye, brighter than all the luminaries that shine in the firmament, penetrates the deepest recesses of thought and of purpose, and whose presence encompasses and pervades you; let God be invoked to sanction the covenant into which you now enter—that you will separate yourselves from the world that lieth in wickedness; that you will repair to the foot of that cross on which Christ expiated the guilt of his people; that there you will surrender your souls and your bodies to the redeeming power and to the sanctifying grace of Jehovah; that you will honor those whom he sends to leave his mes-

sage and plead his cause with you; and that, with grateful and rejoicing hearts, you will walk in the way that he points out as the way that leads to life and immortality. And when inward corruption, or an ensnaring world, or spiritual enemies, interfere to weaken your faith and seduce you into sin, think of your obligations —think of the grace by which alone you can be saved—think of the wounds by which Jesus takes away your transgressions—think of the love of that Holy Spirit whom your backsliding will grieve—think of the sorrows of those who, desiring you to be their crown of joy and rejoicing, must mourn and weep when they see your falling away—think of the endless ages that lie before you; and let all these considerations put their interdict upon every unbelieving thought—upon every unholy desire—upon every forbidden gratification; and determine you, under God, to remain steadfast in the faith of the gospel, and inflexible in your adherence to that Saviour, who encourages you to steadfastness and perseverance by this high promise, "Unto him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me upon my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father upon his throne."

SERMON II.*

HUMAN AND DIVINE LOVE CONTRASTED.

ROMANS v. 7, 8.

"*For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*"

God's love to men, in its various relations, and in its various expressions, is the great and prevalent theme of the gospel. The gospel, indeed, is altogether a manifestation of that love, not only in the plan which it unfolds, but throughout all the language of its record. It is not only asserted that God loves us, but one principal object of whatever the sacred writers have been prompted to say, appears to be that of magnifying the divine attribute, and enhancing the estimation in which it should be held by those who are the objects of its exercise. And they do so, by employing simple but emphatic declarations—by indulging in bold and striking figures—and by having recourse to interesting, familiar, and impressive analogies.

Of this latter mode of showing forth the greatness of God's love, we have an excellent example in the words

* *Preached* at the celebration of the Lord's Supper, in St. George's *Church, Edinburgh*, 10th May, 1829.

of my text. The apostle draws his illustration from what occurs among men—from their sentiments and behavior towards those of their own species, whom they are led to succor or befriend. In the practical regards, which they exhibit for one another in circumstances of danger, or in times of need, we may sometimes be called to witness an extraordinary display of generosity and disinterestedness. But the most surprising instance of it, which has actually happened, or which can even be expected or imagined to happen, comes far—comes infinitely—behind that love to our race which God has revealed in the scheme of human redemption. On comparison, not only does the latter infinitely surpass the former in degree, but it possesses a richness, and it flows in a direction, and it engages in enterprises, and it delights in doings, which constitute a perfect contrast between the one and the other, and represent the love of God to man as belonging to a higher order of affections, than the love of man to his fellow, even in its purest and loftiest achievements.

Let us give our attention for a little to this important subject, by considering the two branches separately, into which it here divides itself, and the relation which they bear to the apostle's object in bringing them under our view.

I. First, there is the love of man to his fellow-creatures. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die."

In the annals of the world, you may find instances of generosity and of gratitude, in which these sentiments were manifested by the greatest of all personal sacrifices —the sacrifice of life. But such instances are rare,— so rare, that the apostle himself does not seem to have been aware of one which he could specify as authentic and appropriate; for he speaks here, not as if he had a matter of real and known fact in his eye, but only as if he were admitting an hypothesis, an event within the bounds of *possibility or of likelihood*. And, with all your

knowledge of history, even since the introduction of Christianity has engendered the spirit, and given larger room for the exploits, of a nobler philanthropy, there are but few among you, perhaps, who can produce a single example of the benevolent heroism to which we allude. You may have read or heard of frightful dangers being encountered, poignant sufferings being endured, and extraordinary alienations of wealth or power being submitted to, for the purpose of rescuing others from threatened and inevitable destruction. There may be cases of this kind, amounting to the romantic and the splendid, which cannot be contemplated without admiration, and which redeem our species, in some measure, from the stigma of that selfishness which is generally imputed to it, and by which it is too truly characterized. But seldom has it been known, that any one has deliberately devoted himself to death, in order to deliver his fellow-mortal even from the heaviest calamity, or to procure for him even the most precious privilege. And among the few solitary cases of this kind, with which the course of ages has furnished us, it may not perhaps be difficult to discover, that the deed which has been ascribed to generous and high-wrought feeling, might be justly, and in a great degree at least, traced to the workings of self-love, or to a desire for posthumous fame, or to some other motive which detracts from the worth and purity of the affection that was supposed to be chiefly operative.

Granting, however, that instances could be adduced free from all such imperfection and alloy, it remains true, that wherever the elevated spirit in question has displayed itself, it has been uniformly a tribute paid to distinguished and commanding excellence, or in acknowledgment of obligations too strong and too sacred to be satisfactorily fulfilled by a less noble or a less costly recompense. It has been dictated by an enthusiastic and worshipping delight in pre-eminent virtue, or called forth by such experience of undeserved and unexpected, and unmeasured kindness, as over

powers every consideration of ease and safety, and can be contented with nothing short of the highest and most unbounded expressions of reciprocal attachment. And, if we seek for it animating a single bosom, or giving birth to a single effort, where it had nothing to awaken it, or nothing to work upon but moral corruption, base ingratitude, bitter hostility, total and inveterate worthlessness—we shall seek for it in vain, for we shall seek for that, to which there is no adequate cause—no counterpart in the rational constitution of man—to which his judgment and his sensibilities are in thorough opposition, and of which, therefore, the whole earth has never afforded the slightest proof, or been visited with one solitary practical illustration.

"Scarcely for a righteous man will one die." Suppose an individual distinguished by the strictest principles of honor and integrity; who had ever abhorred the most distant approach to any thing that savored of injustice or oppression; who had exerted himself on all occasions to maintain the rights, and redress the wrongs, of others; and who not only had committed no offence against the community, but whose undeviating rectitude, whose righteous deportment, whose immovable fidelity, whose defence of truth, whose practice of all the sterner virtues, arising from the fear of God and the hatred of every thing that is mean or base, had distinguished him above his every associate and fellow-citizen, and rendered him the object of profound and universal veneration; suppose that such a person had long filled your eye and commanded your respect, and that by the decree of iniquity or of despotism, he were doomed to expiate an imaginary crime on an ignominious scaffold —which of you would step forward to ward off his fate, and to save his life by the sacrifice of your own? Is there one in the whole range of your personal acquaintance, or is there one of all the multitude that books and fame have brought within the sphere of your knowledge, whom you could confidently expect to pay such a difficult and an expensive homage to moral greatness in

the form of fallen humanity? Or, from what you feel in your own minds, and from what you know of that nature which you have in common with the whole posterity of Adam, could you anticipate that any man, with all the passionate devotedness he might be conceived to possess to whatsoever things are true, and virtuous, and venerable, could so far overcome his inborn repugnance to the suffering of death, as that he would willingly submit to it, even in its mildest shape, in order to purchase an exemption from the evil for *him* who had been thus long and deservedly the object of his deepest reverential regard? No, my friends; neither experience, nor observation, nor any acquaintance you may otherwise have with mankind, will justify you in speculating on such an instance of love, as coming within the limits of probability, or in affirming it as a fact which has at any time been exhibited to the world. You can only allow it to be possible; and say with the apostle, that "scarcely for a *righteous* man will one die."

But, supposing, that to the righteousness of this individual, we were to add the more engaging and attractive graces of benevolence; supposing that he shrunk from the very idea of inflicting pain on any of his fellow-creatures—that he sympathized with all the children of affliction—that he was prompt, and liberal, and unwearied, in relieving distress wherever it was to be found—that he was ever ready to help his friends, and to forgive his enemies—that he delighted in scattering blessings over all his neighborhood, and diffusing happiness throughout the whole family of mankind—that the poor and the ignorant, the fatherless and the widow, the sorrowful and the outcast, found in him a refuge from their troubles, and a solace to their hearts—that he was distinguished, in short, by all that is melting in tenderness, by all that is winning in compassion, by all that is god-like in beneficence; and supposing that his goodness had not been able to screen him from the tyrant's violence, but had only seemed to hasten his *fall, and to bring* upon him the doom of most unmerited

destruction, would there be any among those to whom such merciful and generous characters as his are dearest—would there be any, even of those who had shared most plentifully in the kindness that he felt, and in the bounties that he lavished, and over whose feelings gratitude had acquired the most undivided ascendency, that would agree to be his substitute, to receive the stroke which was about to fall upon *him*, and to expire amidst shame and torture, in his behalf? Yes; you may conceive such cases to occur. There is something within us which, though it amounts not to all that is requisite for the heroism that is imagined, seems to tell us, that by minds of greater ardor and of stronger nerve, it is a practicable attainment. And it is believed, that even in this world—so barren of sublime morality—it has been oftener than once realized. Still, however, the apostle speaks correctly when he says, that it is only "some" who would thus die for a good man—that, even for this act of chivalrous performance, there would be required a "daring" of which man's breast is seldom conscious—and that after all, the fact must be qualified with a "peradventure," as if it were still but doubtful, and hardly to be numbered among the higher accomplishments of our species, or among the nobler capabilities of our nature.

To the statement of the apostle, we may superadd the statement of our Lord himself, that "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." This is the utmost limit to which human affection can go. No higher or more precious exercise of it can be predicated with any degree of certainty and truth. The tie of friendship is strong and endearing. Those whom it unites have a mutual sympathy and a mutual complacency, to which the strongest ordinary likings and alliances bear no proper comparison. They have a community of attachments and aversions, of joys and of sorrows. Their hearts are knit together, as if they were one. It is misery for them to be separated in life, and *greater misery still* to be divided by death.

And he is happiest who is privileged to offer the largest sacrifices for the welfare and the safety of the other, when opportunity occurs, or when circumstances require. Under such impulse, it is not difficult to call up cases to our imagination, and it may not be impossible to discover cases in history, which hold out one man risking or surrendering his life, that he may vindicate the honor, or redeem the life, of another. And this may be still more readily admitted, if we consider friendship as comprehending those relationships of kindred, which binding husband and wife, parent and child, brother and sister, by a thousand endearments, render delegated suffering a pleasure, as well as a duty, and instinctively prompt to efforts and endurances, from whose ample range even the terrors of death are not excluded.

Now, in all the examples to which we have referred the sacrifice is made in consideration of motives that arise from worth exhibited, or benefits conferred, or obligations of some kind or other imposed, by them on whose account it has been demanded. Scarcely for a "righteous man" will one die—peradventure for a "good man," some will even dare to die—greater love hath no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for "his friend." But supposing a person destitute of these claims on generous feeling—supposing him, on the contrary, to be iniquitous, malevolent, and hostile; supposing him to be covered with moral deformity that makes him loathsome and guilty of atrocious crimes committed against the comfort, the reputation, the honor, of one who had lavished upon him every token of kind regard, who had treated him with the confidence of a friend, with the affection of a brother, with the tenderness of a parent—and supposing that for all his demerit, he had been condemned to die and under his sentence of condemnation, cherished a bitter an enmity, and expressed as determined a vengeance, against his benefactor as he had ever done before —would that benefactor, or would any of the children of men, consent to occupy his room, and suffer his judicial fate, in order to send him back again to the life, and the

liberty, and the enjoyment, which he had so justly forfeited? Ah! no: that is a height of love, which humanity has never reached, and of which humanity is utterly incapable. Philosophy may conjecture it as possible, and poetry may give it a place in her fictitious delineations. But we observe not the seeds or elements of it in the moral constitution of man. In vain shall we search for any exemplification of it in the annals of human philanthropy. The scripture represents it as utterly unattainable. And were it ever to occur, we should be compelled to regard it as a miracle not less striking, than the most wonderful of all those wonderful works which stamped divinity on the economy of Moses, and on the gospel of Christ.

II. But that which man, in all his love to his brethren has never felt, or offered, or accomplished, has been realized and manifested in the love which he has experienced from the holy God. "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

The love of God is illustrated by two circumstances here specifically stated. *First*, "Christ died for us;" and *secondly*, and *chiefly*, he "died for us, while we were yet sinners."

1. "Christ died for us." The apostle could not speak of God dying for us, which would have been the exact parallel; for death cannot possibly be predicated of him who is eternal, and who "alone hath immortality." In the First Epistle of John, indeed, at the third chapter, and sixteenth verse, our version reads thus—"Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us." But in the original, it is not "the love of God," but merely "the love," or "love;" and, therefore, we should rather render the passage in the following manner:—"Hereby perceive we the love of God in Christ; or hereby perceive we love—divine love, because he, in whom, and, by whom, that love has been manifested, died for us." Or, if we take it as it stands in our version, we are to consider it as ascribing to God

what strictly and properly can be affirmed only of Christ, —of Christ as "God manifest in the flesh," possessing the divine and human natures in mysterious union, the divine nature imparting a dignity and a value to the human nature, and to the sufferings and death that it endured, which it could not otherwise have had. A similar form of expression is found in the Acts of the Apostles, at the 20th chapter and 28th verse, where Paul is represented as saying to the elders of Ephesus, "Take heed, therefore, unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." In the rigid sense of the terms it could not be the blood of God; but it was the blood of "Emmanuel," or "God with us," incarnate in "the man Christ Jesus." When we speak of the "arm" of God, we mean his power: when we speak of his "eye," we mean his omniscience; and when the apostle speaks of his "blood," he means the atonement which was made for sin by him, who was God and man in one person, and whose supreme deity gave to his suffering humanity its virtue, for the expiation of human guilt.

When, therefore, it is said, in the words of our text, as a proof of God's love, that "Christ died for us," we must remember, exactly and impressively, who Christ was, as well as what he did. He died for us that he might take away our sin, and make reconciliation for our iniquity. And we cannot estimate sufficiently the pains and the ignominy of that death, to which he submitted, as the punishment that was due from holy and incensed omnipotence, to a rebellious, degenerate, and guilty world. But, in viewing it as a manifestation of divine love, it is necessary to recollect the intimate connexion, which God had with it. The scheme, of which it formed the leading feature and the essential principle, was altogether of his appointment.

"He so loved the world, as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life." And in reference to his incar-

nate Son becoming a sin-offering for us, he is said to have "laid upon him the iniquity of us all," and to have "set him forth as a propitiation for our sins through faith in his blood." And, while God was thus so gracious, as to devise a plan, by which our souls might be redeemed through the sacrifice of Christ, it becomes us to think of the relation in which Christ stood to him. Christ was not the creature, nor the mere servant of God, but "his Son, his only begotten and well beloved Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person." Yet, though thus possessed of all the attributes of divinity, and forming the object of the ineffable complacency and love of his Father, God did "not spare him," but prepared a body for his inhabitation, sent him to sojourn in our evil world, made him "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and then "freely delivered him up to the death for us all." So that, "in this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him."

2. But the principal evidence of God's love to us is contained in the fact, that Christ died for us, "while we were yet sinners."

Had the nature and character of man been such, as that the eye of God could have looked on him with complacency—had there existed in him a paramount disposition to keep the divine commandments, and to promote the divine glory—had he followed such a course of obedience as at once conformed to the will, and reflected the image of him, who is "glorious in holiness —or, having, through the power of temptation, fallen from his allegiance, had the feelings of penitential regret and sorrow pervaded his heart, and made him willing to return to the path he had forsaken, and to regain the favor he had lost; and, amidst numerous failings and transgressions, had there been a resolute striving to render any portion of that submission which the great Ruler of the universe must ever require from the rational subjects whom he governs—had these been the circumstan-

ces of the case, we should not have been amazed by any degree of condescension and of pity which appeared in God's administration towards the human race. Mysterious and adorable as the incarnation of his own Son, and its accompanying course of humiliation, must have been in our esteem, whatever gave rise to such an act of benignity, still we should have observed in the objects whom it regarded, the qualities that seemed to merit or to justify it, on the ordinary principles of moral rectitude and consistency. But the marvel lies in this, that there was no good desert—no amiableness of disposition—no excellence of conduct—no compunction for offence, and no desire of reformation—to attract the regards of a holy being, and to invite a willing interposition of his benevolence. On the contrary, there was worthlessness, there was guilt, there was perversity, and such a degree of these odious qualities, as to alienate kind affection—to provoke a just indignation—to warrant an utter exclusion from happiness and from hope. It was this barrier which lay between God and his apostate offspring; and in surmounting it, he has outstripped all the doings, and all the conceptions of man, respecting the exercise of compassion between one intelligence and another, and caused us to wonder and to worship at the extent of that love, which he has embodied in the death of Christ for the salvation of sinners.

We were "yet sinners," when Christ died for us. We were not only undeserving of a single token or communication of good will, but corrupt and vile throughout every department of our moral frame, and throughout the whole extent of our moral practice. We had incurred the displeasure of "him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity," and who "hates all the workers of it with a perfect hatred," and had fully merited the penalty with which he had righteously armed and sanctioned his law. We had no sincere regret, no genuine abasement, no penitential visitings of the soul, to melt his indignant eye, to arrest his avenging arm, to stay his coming wrath, to bespeak his relentings, and his long

suffering, and his sparing mercy. And having trampled on his rich goodness, as well as disobeyed and insulted his dread authority, we had thus arrayed against us that very attribute on which alone we could have depended, and to which alone we could have appealed. So that had our own case been presented to us in all its melancholy details and bearings, and had we judged of it by the feelings of man to man, and the treatment of man by man within the whole range of human consciousness and experience, we must have at once concluded, that if such an arrangement as the death of Christ for sinners was necessary for their redemption, the favor of God which they had lost by transgression they had lost for ever, and that nothing awaited them but punishment, and misery, and despair.

But there are resources in the eternal mind, which are equally beyond our reach and our comprehension. There is a power and a magnitude, and a richness in the love of God towards those upon whom it is set, to which the love of the creature cannot even approximate, of which the imagination of the creature could not have formed any previous idea, and which, even to the experience of the creature, presents a subject of inscrutable mystery—a theme of wondering gratitude and praise. Man may love, man should love, man must love his fellows; but he never did, and never can love them like God. His is a love that throws man's into the distance and the shade. Had he only loved us as man loves, there would have been no salvation—no heaven—no felicity for us—no glad tidings to cheer our hearts;—no promised land on which to fix our anticipations—no table of commemoration and of communion spread for us in the wilderness, to refresh us amidst the toils, and the languishings, and the sorrows of our pilgrimage thither. His violated law must have taken its course; the vials of his wrath must have been poured out; and everlasting, unmitigated ruin must have been our portion. But behold! God is love itself; and his love in all its workings, and in all its influences, and in

all its effects, can stoop to no parallel with the best and most ardent of human affections. Guilt, which forbids and represses man's love, awakens, and kindles, and secures God's. Death for the guilty is too wide a gulf for man's love to pass over. God's love to the guilty is infinitely "stronger than death," and spurns at all such limits, and smiles at the agonies and the ignominies of a cross, that it may have its perfect work. God, in the exercise of his love towards our sinful and miserable race, is concerned, where man would be unmoved, indifferent, and cold. God is full of pity, where man would frown with stern and relentless aversion. God forgives, where man would condemn and punish. God saves, where man would destroy. "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Well may we ask, "Is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" And well may God answer, "My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." And well may we exclaim, "Herein, indeed, is love; not that we loved God—but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins." "O the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of God and of Christ; it passeth knowledge!"

We cannot enter, at present, into a full application of the interesting subject, which we have endeavored to illustrate. But our time has been occupied to little purpose, and we must be very unsusceptible of good impressions, if all that we have offered to your attention be allowed to pass away as a dreamy or useless speculation, and if we do not more or less experience its practical influence in our minds, and manifest it in our conduct. There is no theme more deeply affecting than the love of God, as revealed and set forth in the death of Christ for sinners. It embraces all our permanent interests. It is fitted to exert a happy and improving power over the whole of our Christian charac-

ter. It is fraught with the richest consolation which can be needed by us, or administered to us, in our circumstances of sinfulness, and danger, and distress. And whatever imperfections may attach to our illustrations of it, the simple fact announced in the text, is such as to teach us many useful lessons, and to exert upon us many salutary influences, unless we are strongly cased in infidelity and impenitence. And O, if even our infidelity and impenitence will not melt away at the contemplation of God's rich and ineffable love to our guilty race, how aggravated must be our condemnation, and how utterly hopeless—how impenetrably dark—how superlatively wretched, must be all our future prospects! But if the love of God be felt by us in all its importance, and in all its power, it will constrain us to accept the boon it has provided for us at such a costly rate, and to prize the salvation which comes thus recommended to us, as of inestimable value. It will stir us up to love God in return—to feel for him a love which will fill and pervade the heart, which will lead us to seek and to take delight in holding spiritual intercourse with him, and which will be embodied in our life and conversation, determining us to devote ourselves cordially and constantly to the service of him who has redeemed us in his love and in his pity, that we might be to him a holy people. It will encourage us to confide in God for every blessing that we need, and to confide in him even when appearances would indicate that he has forgotten us or cast us off; for the truth contained in the text is incompatible with any disposition on his part to refuse us whatsoever our necessities may require. "He that spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up to the death for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things;" and how can he ever leave or forsake those whom he thus purchased at the price of blood, so precious and divine. And finally, it will make us embrace every opportunity of celebrating its greatness, of proclaiming our sense of those obligations under which it has laid us, of exercis-

ing all those sentiments which it naturally inspires, and of pledging ourselves to all that conduct which it both prescribes and exemplifies. In the good providence of God, that opportunity is now before us. Let us cheerfully and gratefully avail ourselves of it. Let us sit down at a communion table with hearts overflowing with love to Him who first loved us, and who loved us in the midst of our unworthiness, and who loved us even to the death. Let us exercise a vigorous and a lively faith in the merit of that great atonement, which the wisdom of God, in furtherance of the love of God, has appointed for cancelling our guilt, and establishing our peace and hope. Let us be filled with sentiments of profound humility and godly sorrow, as we read, in the memorials of Christ's death, the evil and the bitterness of sin which rendered it necessary, and, to take away which, its shame and its agonies were endured. Let us abound in joy when we meditate on the fruitful and inexhaustible mercy, which we are called to remember as we shew forth the Lord's death, and from which we are emboldened to draw consolation and encouragement, and a liberal and constant supply to every necessity that can possibly occur in our lot. And having experienced the love of God in giving Christ to the death for us, let us rest upon the promise, that this divine Saviour will come again—that he, whom we commemorate as having once suffered for our transgressions, will appear hereafter, and ere long, to give us complete and eternal redemption, and that, having rescued us from the dishonors of the grave, and clothed us with the robe of immortality, and introduced us into the incorruptible inheritance of his Father's kingdom, he will give us in our everlasting experience to understand the full meaning, and will tune our hearts for pouring forth the rapturous strains of that high anthem, "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God even his Father; to him be glory and dominion *forever* and ever. Amen."

EXHORTATION AFTER THE COMMUNION.*

At the close of the solemn service in which it has been your privilege at this time to engage, permit me, my friends, to address to you a few exhortations, suited to the circumstances in which you are placed.

And first, let me observe, that if there be any in this assembly who have not only withheld themselves from the Lord's table on the present occasion, but are habitually chargeable with such neglect, they are surely the objects of deep commiseration. I speak not of those who are kept back by conscientious motives—who really desire to engage in the work of solemn communion, but abstain from it because they are, in their own considerate judgment, undeserving of such a high privilege. To persons of this description I would feel, and exercise, all manner of Christian forbearance and kindness. I approve of their delicacy of conscience and their humility of spirit. I would, at the same time, direct them to cherish more engaging views of their Saviour's love; and not to consider the lowliest convictions of their own unworthiness as, in any measure, inconsistent with the liveliest dependence upon his merits. I would encourage them to regard the ordinance as intended for weak and timid "babes," as much as for "perfect men in Christ Jesus." I would hope that, by persevering in prayer, and by following on to know the Lord, and by setting themselves to acquire more correct and scriptural views both of the nature of the institution and of the character of its Author, they will ere long feel themselves at liberty to observe it without any slavish dread of offending God, or of sinning against their own souls. And I would only caution

* Addressed to the congregation of St. George's Church, Edinburgh, after the celebration of the Lord's Supper, 10th May, 1829.

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them against yielding to those groundless and superstitious scruples, that sometimes tempt the believing and the good, to shrink from a service in which they are called to honor their Redeemer, to partake of the richest blessings of the gospel, and to advance the interests of pure and undefiled religion in the world. At present, however, I allude to those who have no cordial wish to be communicants—who do not think of aspiring to the duties and the privileges of that character—who allow every successive opportunity of going to the Lord's table to pass away from them unimproved and unheeded—and who continue in this negligence from year to year, through indifference, or contempt, or worldly-mindedness, or practical infidelity. It is of these that I now speak; and every real Christian will unite with me in saying, that they are objects of deep commiseration. They are living in obstinate disobedience to the express and dying commandment of him, who has "all power in heaven and on earth." They are callous to the impressions of that ineffable love which he manifested in dying for their eternal redemption. They reject with disdain the means which divine wisdom has appointed for supporting the life, and promoting the nourishment and comfort, of his church. They proclaim their want of those principles and dispositions to which the promises of glory are annexed, and their hostility to that system of grace by which alone they can be delivered from the wrath to come. And, if there be any truth in Christianity, they are yet in their sins—"without God and without hope." O ye to whom this melancholy description applies, blame us not when we declare, that you are the objects of our pity. It is not from any sentiment of proud scorn, or of haughty superiority, that we say this. We feel compassion for your state, because we see you despising the great salvation—far from the kingdom of heaven—and walking in the broad way that leadeth to destruction. We would pray for you—that the Spirit of all grace may enlighten your mind, and subdue the perversity of your

will, and bring you under subjection to the righteousness and the law of Christ. We would beseech you to stop short in your career of thoughtlessness and folly—to reflect seriously on what is past, and to think solemnly of what is to come—and to mind the things which belong to your peace, before they be forever hid from your eyes. And we would hold up to view the ordinance you have been disregarding, as exhibiting, in the death and mediation of Christ, the only way by which you can return to God, and obtain eternal life; and as denouncing, at the same time, through the sorrows and ignominies of the cross, that awful retribution which awaits those who reject the salvation of the gospel, and will not have Christ to rule over them.

But we fear that, even to some who have been at the Lord's table, we must speak the language of warning and rebuke. It is refreshing, indeed, to see such a goodly number, as we have seen this day, setting at defiance the scorn of unbelieving men, and keeping in remembrance the death and the cross of their Redeemer. Yet we know that "all are not Israel who are of Israel"—that the profession of Christianity and Christianity itself are far from being inseparably connected—that not every one who says unto Jesus, however publicly and however solemnly, Lord, Lord," shall enter into the kingdom of heaven. I would therefore speak to you in the spirit and in the language of a wholesome and affectionate jealousy. I would ask you, from what motives, and in what manner, you have engaged in the work of sacred communion? Have you done it in mere compliance with the wishes of your friends, or from mere conformity to the custom of the place? Have you done it that you might acquire, or that you might support, a good reputation in the world? Have you done it in order to conceal from the eye of suspicion and observation some defect or some sin that you wish not to be known? Or have you done it with the unscriptural view of atoning for your past wickedness, and laying up a stock of merit for the time to come? Have

you made no preparation for the solemnity in which you have been engaged? Have you entered into no previous examination of your heart, and your character, and your spiritual state? Have you come to the Lord's table with thoughtlessness and indifference? Have you sat down in ignorance of the nature and purposes of the institution? Have you shewed forth the death of Christ without any lively faith in his merits—without any cordial hatred of sin, which caused his sufferings—without any decided resolution to forsake the iniquities from which they were endured to redeem you—without any conscious love to your God and Saviour—without any kind and forgiving affection towards your fellow-men—without any purpose of devoting yourselves to the service and glory of him who has done so much for your salvation? Have your imaginations been allowed to wander on the mountains of vanity, and your affections to settle on the pursuits and pleasures of the world, when they should have been raised to the heaven, and stretched forward to the immortality, to which the doctrine of a communion-service naturally taught you to aspire? Are these the motives which have influenced you, and is this the manner in which you have acted on the present occasion? Then you have not partaken of the Lord's Supper in a true and spiritual sense. You have been "eating and drinking unworthily." You have profaned the body and the blood of Christ. And though God may not inflict upon you visible judgments, as he did on the Corinthian church, yet, as the God of ordinances, and as a jealous God, he will not permit you to be thus hypocritical or profane with impunity, and he will assuredly punish you for it, except you repent. "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that this, your great sin, may be blotted out." Apply for pardon, through faith in that sacrifice, which you have treated with so much levity and contempt. Beseech God to cleanse you from every carnal view, and to give you all the graces of his Spirit. And be resolved that, henceforth, every returning communion, which you

may be permitted to see, shall find you ready to partake of it with clean hands, and pure hearts, and earnest desires to be "found of God in peace, without spot and blameless."

On the other hand, does your conscience tell you that your motives have been good—that you have come to the Lord's table from regard to the commandment of Christ—from gratitude and love to him as your Redeemer—from a desire to promote the honor of his name and the interests of his gospel—and from a becoming wish to advance your own spiritual comfort and improvement? Did you examine yourselves as to your fitness for the communion service? and did you find that you were possessed, in some good measure, of those qualifications which the nature of the ordinance and the word of God prescribe? And when engaged in the work of commemoration, were your hearts affected by a sense of its importance and solemnity? Did you hold communion with the Father, and fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ? Were you in the exercise of lively faith—of pious affection—of brotherly love—of holy desires and resolutions? And was it your earnest prayer, and your earnest endeavor, that you might glorify him whom you were remembering, and that the homage and devotion of your souls might be accepted, and that you might give yourselves away to God in a covenant never to be broken, and never to be forgotten?

I do not ask you, my friends, if, in all those respects, you have done nothing amiss—if you can say that your way has been perfect—if you can look back, with unalloyed complacency and satisfaction, upon every part of your conduct and experience as communicants? No, my friends; the best of us must be conscious that imperfection and sin have tarnished the purity of our offering. And we all need to humble ourselves before the holy God whom we have been serving, and to apply for the pardoning efficacy and the sanctifying influences of the blood of Christ. And, may "the good Lord

pardon every one who has prepared his heart to seek God, the Lord God of his fathers, though he has not been cleansed according to the preparation of the sanctuary." But have you been sincere in your desires to "do this in remembrance of Christ?' Have you been really anxious to "keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth?" Have you set yourselves to act from suitable motives, and in a becoming manner? And are you conscious that, with regard to the particulars I have mentioned, you were qualified, in some good measure, to partake of the ordinance, and that, in some good measure, your participation of it has come up to the standard of Christian feeling and of Christian attainment? Then, be grateful to God who has not only admitted you to the privilege of holy communion, but has enabled you cheerfully to embrace, and rightly to enjoy it. Be grateful, that instead of keeping away, like many others, under the influence of mistaken views, or of dislike to spiritual exercises, he has put it into your hearts to give this public testimony to the truth, and the power, and the excellence of the gospel. Be grateful that amidst the trials and the sorrows of life, you have been allowed to draw, from a believing contemplation of the memorials of your Redeemer's death, that support and consolation which it is so well calculated to afford. Be grateful that, through the grace given you, you have been strengthened to discharge an important duty, and encouraged to employ an instituted means of edification; and that in the fidelity with which you have acted, and in the comfort which you have experienced, you have a gratifying token of your present acceptance with God, and of your future progress in the divine life.

But do not rest satisfied with mere emotions, or with the mere expressions of thanksgiving. You must show your gratitude in your conduct; and maintain a life and conversation suitable to the profession you have made, and the privileges you have enjoyed. It is not ordinary decency of behavior nor ordinary acquirements in

gion that will answer the purpose. The obligations upon you by your appearance at the Lord's table, tate a deportment distinguished by its purity, and its :ellence. And, if you obey them in any tolerable ;ree, we shall see you adorned with all the graces virtues of Christianity, abounding in godliness and d works, and advancing with steady and progressive ɔs in the path of righteousness. After having seen h a lively representation of the evil of sin, will not be more than ever the object of your aversion, and not you more than ever strive to keep yourselves n its pollutions? After having admired the greatness your Saviour's compassion in giving his life a ransom your souls, will not you feel yourselves peculiarly powerfully constrained to glorify him in your bodies in your spirits which are his; and will not you ık every act of obedience which you can render, but inadequate return for that wondrous love which de him die for you upon the cross? After perceiv- that it was one great purpose of those sufferings of which you have been commemorating, to deliver from iniquity, and to call you to holiness, will not cheerfully surrender yourselves to the design which had in view, by denying all ungodliness and worldly s, and by living soberly, righteously, and godly, in world? After having professed, with so much so- nity, that you are his disciples, will not you be care- to justify this profession, by devotedness to him in ry department of his gospel—by steadily adhering ıis doctrine—by confessing him openly before men y relying without disguise on the merits of his cross y a conscientious submission to his will—and by a ıful imitation of his example? And after having lared that you are expectants of heaven, and that look, with hope and joy, for the second coming of r Lord, will not you be anxious to cultivate the racter which such anticipations demand, by rising erior to the pleasures and allurements of this present world, by renouncing all the pursuits which are in-

consistent with your eternal prospects, and by acquiring and cherishing these holy habits, both of mind and conduct, which are requisite to fit you for the bliss of immortality? O my friends, you can never be too scrupulous in abstaining from sinful indulgence; you can never be too diligent in the performance of duty; you can never be too much devoted to that work, which consists in obedience to the law of God, and in preparation for the glories of his presence. Be persuaded, then, to give yourselves wholly to these things. Reduce your principles uniformly into practice. And shew that you have been with Jesus, by your unreserved conformity to his will, and by carrying your Christian principles into all the various scenes, and circumstances, and relations, of life. This is necessary for your own personal welfare; and it is also necessary for promoting the interests of pure and undefiled religion among your fellow-men. Your character is not complete, it is radically defective, unless you be "holy in all manner of conversation." And, if you are seen forgetting your communion vows, and violating the precepts of the gospel, and conforming to the practices and the maxims of ungodly men, you not only expose yourselves to just derision and contempt, but you bring dishonor on the cross of Christ; you prove a stumbling-block to the young and the wavering; you mislead many by your example, whom your instructions can never reach; and you tempt "them that are without" to "blaspheme that holy name by which you have been called." And, if your conduct be thus wanting in itself, and thus pernicious in its effects, O how will you answer for it, on the great day of the Lord! Let me conjure you, then, to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called." Let it be the object of your constant ambition, and let it be the subject of your daily prayer, that you may be kept from the paths of iniquity, that you may set God continually before you, and that you may "stand *perfect* and complete in all his holy will."

And let me especially press this exhortation upon those who have for the first time presented themselves before the Lord at a communion table. I congratulate you, my young friends, on your taking this step, so important to yourselves, and so interesting to all who love your souls. I am glad that you have thus openly enlisted under the banner of the cross—that you have renounced, in this public manner, the devil, the world, and the flesh—that you have been seen taking up the pilgrim's staff, and setting your faces Zion-ward. And I trust that you have done all this in the sincerity of your hearts—that you are not acting an inconsiderate or a hypocritical part—that the "good confession which you have witnessed before many witnesses" has come from an approving mind—and that you are indeed desirous and determined to be all that your outward service has promised. It remains for you to vindicate your own sincerity, and to maintain your own consistency, by the tenor of your future deportment. Never forget, then, the engagements which you have so solemnly contracted, but study to fulfil them with the utmost fidelity and care. Be not "of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." The evil propensities of your own wayward hearts—the allurements and vanities of a thoughtless, corrupted world—the sinful insinuations and wicked example of unchristian people—and the arts and influence of your spiritual enemies, who operate upon your minds, though unseen—all these will attempt to draw you away from the allegiance you have sworn, and from the resolutions you have formed. But in the strength of God you must resist them all; and, whatever sacrifices it may cost you, and with whatever difficulties it may be attended, you must keep your confidence in Jesus steadfast unto the end—you must hold fast your integrity, and never let it go—you must persevere, with unshaken constancy, in the path of duty and obedience. Recollect, at every step you take in life, that you are not your own—that you have given

yourselves up to God—and that you are bound by the strongest and most endearing ties, to "glorify him in your bodies and spirits, which are his." Read his blessed word, that you may grow in saving knowledge. "Remember his sabbaths to keep them holy." Never "forsake the assembling of yourselves together" in his sacred courts. Pray to him "with all prayer and supplication in the spirit." Avoid the company of such as trample on his authority and despise his ordinances; and associate with those who fear his name and keep his commandments. When the allurements of the world solicit your affections or your conformity, cast a believing recollection back upon the cross of Christ, and an eye of hope forward to the joys of heaven, and scorn the pleasures which would frustrate the purposes of your Saviour's death, or darken your anticipations of future glory. And when any peculiar temptation occurs, or when the impetuosity of youthful passion begins to break forth, or when the ridicule of unbelieving or ungodly men is threatening to conquer your holy purposes, then lift up your soul to the God of all grace, and cry for the help of his almighty arm: call to remembrance the vows and resolutions, the faith and the comforts, of a communion table; and forget not that death is fast approaching, and may come when you are not aware, to deliver you from the trials which now distress you, and to conduct you to that land of uprightness and of rest, where no sin is committed and where no sorrow is felt, and where there is fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore.

Yes, my friends, death is approaching to all of us. And it becomes all of us to watch and to be ready. Before another communion arrive, some of us, it is probable, shall have bidden an everlasting adieu to this land of ordinances and of probation. Which of us it is to whom the summons shall be sent, we cannot tell. It may be the youngest, and the stoutest, and the most thoughtless, of us all. O then, how deeply should our minds be impressed with the shortness and uncertainty

ime; and with what diligence should we apply our-
es to the work that is given us to do! Let none of
e idle or unconcerned. Let none of us delay or
e with preparation for eternity. Let none of us be
olish as to put our immortal interests to the hazard
n unexpected call. Rather let us be active, and
ful, and unremitting, in the service of him to whom
are to render an account. And when we leave the
se and table of the Lord, let our first step be the be-
ing of a more holy and heavenly course than that
ch we have hitherto pursued; so that, living always
faith in the Son of God, and abounding always in
duties of our Christian vocation, at whatever day or
hatever hour our Master call us away, we may re-
e from him this gladdening sentence, "Well done,
d and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of
r Lord."

SERMON III.*

THE JOYFUL SOUND.

PSALM lxxxix. 15.

"*Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.*"

THE joyful sound here mentioned primarily refers to the blowing of the silver trumpets, on certain festivals, by the sons of Aaron—an institution which God appointed for the purpose of reminding the Israelites of their being under the continued care and protection of him, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. Considering the hardships, and dangers, and sufferings they had to encounter in the wilderness, this ceremony was calculated to give them consolation and encouragement during their pilgrimage towards the promised land. And even, after they were fully established in the privileges for which they were destined in the counsels of Heaven, it had the effect of reviving and strengthening the impression, that they were safe under the guardianship of that Being who had originally delivered them, by whom they had been hitherto guided and defended, and whose promise of unfailing regard was as faithful, as his mercy was abundant, and his power omnipotent.

* Preached in St. George's Church, Edinburgh, on the evening of Sabbath, 16th May, 1830, for the Edinburgh Continental Society.

The Mosaic economy is at an end: its peculiar ceremonies are abrogated: of its symbols of a present and superintending Divinity, not one is left; and the sound of the silver trumpets is heard no more. But as ancient Israel is commonly accounted and held out in Scripture as typical of true believers under the new dispensation, so particular appointments in the former may, without any violation of propriety, and with manifest advantage as to instruction and illustration, be considered as representing those features in the latter with which they are found to correspond. And, when we think of what the gospel is, and of the circumstances in which it finds us, and of the benefits which we derive from it, we are not putting a forced interpretation upon our text, when we take the "joyful sound" to mean the message of the gospel, and the declaration of the Psalmist to refer to the happiness of all those by whom that message is known, according to its own import and purpose, and according to the will and intention of its gracious Author.

It is in this view that we propose to make the declaration contained in these words, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound," the subject of our remarks and meditations.

We need not occupy your time at present in shewing that blessedness is essentially connected with the gospel. The gospel is *intended* to make us blessed, because He, in whose will it has originated, is full of compassion, and announces that here his compassion has had its richest and most determinate exercise. It is *fitted* to make us blessed; for the same God, whose compassion prompted it, has also contrived all its arrangements and operations, and the infinite wisdom which belongs to him must have so adapted the means to the end, as effectually to secure whatsoever it designs. It is *sure* to make us blessed; its machinery being moved, and its effects being produced, by the power to which all opposition is feeble, and before which all difficulties vanish away. And it is *known* to make us blessed; for we have only to ap-

peal to the experience of the church in every successive age and in every variety of its features, in proof of the fact, that the gospel has done for its disciples what nothing else has been able to accomplish—has put a joy into their hearts, and shed a brightness over their prospects, beyond all that worldly minds have experienced or conceived. And, with respect to such of you now hearing me, as have been made glad by deliverance from the evils and the fears of sin, and by restoration to divine favor and to heavenly hope, were I to ask you, to what source you trace all this happiness, there is not one of you who would not instantaneously lay his hand upon the gospel, and say, "It is this, and this alone, which has made me what I am—which has converted my troubles into peace, and, in the midst of all my calamities, has taught me to rejoice with a joy that is unspeakable and full of glory."

But let us consider what is implied in "knowing the sound" or message of the gospel, as connected with the blessedness which it imparts. The discussion may be salutary both to those who enjoy that blessedness, and to those who are still strangers to it. And may the Spirit of all grace render it effectual for edification and for comfort!

1. In the first place, to know the joyful sound implies that the gospel is communicated to us.

When we say that the gospel must be communicated to those whom it renders blessed, we state a proposition which stands opposed to the opinions of many. These persons do not pretend to think the gospel useless—but still they do not think the knowledge of it absolutely necessary. This knowledge of it they admit to be beneficial in several respects—but they do not admit it to be essential to salvation. So far otherwise, that they deem those from whom it has been withheld, as safe in their eternal interests as those are to whom it has been conveyed.

Such doctrine we hold to be altogether erroneous. The gospel proposes to redeem sinners from the burden

of certain evils, and to restore them to the enjoyment of certain blessings. And it is represented as the only method by which it has pleased God that these ends should be accomplished. At least, we do not learn from revelation, nor is it taught any where else, that there is another method, possessed of divine authority, or of sufficient virtue for working out the same great and important purposes. It follows, accordingly, that if we would obtain the deliverance and the happiness which are designed for us by the gospel, we are shut up to that system, and must not assume the privilege of looking beyond its confines. Every thing which overleaps its bounds, or supersedes its provisions, is fancy, speculation, presumption, impiety. Not only is the gospel able to save us, but, according to the divine decree, the gospel alone can save us.

Now, what is the gospel as the scheme of human salvation? It is not an absolute and unconditional arrangement for taking away men's guilt, and reinstating them in their original privileges, without any relation to what they are or to what they do upon earth, and limited wholly to their judicial condition in the sight of God, and to their ultimate admission into heaven. Were that the case, a written communication on the subject would have been unnecessary; or, a large proportion of the written communication actually given might have been spared. When we look into its pages, we do not find it stated, or insinuated, or even allowed to be inferred, that the gospel is nothing to us or to our fellow-men, except in so far as it contains the fact that divine mercy has interposed in behalf of our apostate race, and effected for them a redemption which leaves us no reason to doubt of their ultimate felicity. There is no countenance given in any one part of its record to such an idea. On the contrary, it every where proceeds on the supposition, that the fact must be announced to those whom it concerns, in order that it may become practically available for their well-being. And why is this annunciation requisite? Because the plan of saving

mercy which it unfolds, clearly embraces the *character*, as well as the *condition*, of the sinner: it implies—it establishes—it intimates a connexion between the two; and this connexion is so close, and of such a nature, that the condition of the sinner cannot become what his safety requires it to be, unless the character of the sinner is made to undergo a corresponding change. And this change cannot take place without the concurrence of his will, and that movement among all the affections and principles of his moral frame which pre-supposes him to be acquainted with what the gospel demands of him, as well as with what the gospel has effected for him. For indeed, it is "the word of the truth of the gospel," which, according to the divine appointment, is to be the instrument of his conversion and his sanctification; and it is inconceivable how the word should have any influence either on his understanding or on his heart, unless it be first submitted to his attention, and brought within the sphere of his observation. It is the divinely instituted means of renewing and purifying the sinner, of giving him that interest in the merit of the Saviour as the object of belief, without which there is no pardon for him here, and of producing in him that spiritual renovation, without which there is no heaven for him hereafter. And to say that without the use of those means, these ends may yet be attained, is to say that God will set aside the plan which he has not only devised, but even proclaimed to those for whose guidance it is intended, and by a miraculous operation more wonderful than any which he has ever used, will contradict and nullify that method of redemption which he employed numberless miracles to constitute, to reveal, and to attest for the benefit of mankind.

On this single and obvious ground, then, it is impossible for those to whom the gospel is unknown, to become partakers of the specific salvation which the gospel provides and promises. This salvation can become the portion of such only as have the faith and the purity which the gospel prescribes; the faith which unites us

to Christ, who is the only source of spiritual blessings; and the purity which, while it is itself one of these blessings, is essential to our fruition of the greatest of them,—eternal life. And as no man can exercise a faith, and cultivate a purity, of whose object and obligations, and extent he is entirely ignorant, so his ignorance of the gospel, in which alone these things are made known, must clearly debar him from all share in the benefits of that salvation, which either involves, or is exclusively annexed to, the faith, and the purity that are enjoined.

The heavenly Canaan has been purchased for sinful men; but they cannot reach it under all circumstances and by all ways. There is a certain path which leads to it. If they do not walk in that path, it must ever remain to them a strange and foreign land. And how can they walk in that path, unless they receive direction from him, whose province it is at once to assure them of its reality, and to guide them to its blessedness? And, as the Israelites, if the sound of the silver trumpets had not reached their ears, could not possibly have profited by that ordinance—so the gospel cannot prove either the means of salvation, or a source of joy, to any of the children of men to whom its message is not sent, or upon whom its light has not arisen. Hence it is that we read of men "perishing for lack of knowledge,"—a fact which could have no occurrence in the history of the world, and no place in the book of God, if the notion were true against which I am contending. And hence, when the apostle Paul says, that "whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved," he adds, "How shall they call upon him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard?"—an addition to the apostle's declaration which could have no meaning, if men might be saved who had never heard, and therefore never believed. And hence the peremptory command of our Saviour to his disciples, to "go and preach the gospel to every creature—christianizing all nations

and teaching all nations,"—a command which was quite superfluous, if the grand object of Christ's mission could have been attained, and guilty men made heirs of life and immortality, without being taught his religion, and without being made his disciples. And hence the ardent and devoted zeal with which those whom he ordained to the ministry of the gospel executed that high commission; the diligence with which they labored to bring both Jews and Gentiles to an acquaintance with the truth; the compassionate earnestness with which they besought them to accept the message, and to obey it; the sacrifices which they cheerfully made, that they might promulgate those glad tidings with which their divine Master had entrusted them,—a course of conduct which on their part was altogether unaccountable and unnecessary, unless they considered the eternal well-being of those for whom they felt and did and suffered so much, to be inseparably connected with their possession of the gospel message.

The argument admits of a copious illustration; but we need not pursue it any farther for the purpose of being convinced that we cannot be blessed, unless we are permitted to hear the sound of the gospel.

And this view of the subject is far from being unimportant or useless; for it teaches us to set a higher value on the privilege than we could ever imagine to belong to it, if we had thought that the gospel could have achieved all its saving work upon us, though we had never been made aware of its existence till we had experienced the fruit of that work in heaven; and, of course, to cling more fondly to it, to feel a deeper interest in it, and to cherish more suitable and influential sentiments respecting it, than we could possibly have done on any other supposition. And, then, while it is thus beneficial to ourselves, it leads us, at the same time, to take a livelier and more sympathetic concern in the spiritual welfare of our brethren—of those among ourselves who, though dwelling within the precincts of Christendom, have scarcely had their ears saluted with

lings of salvation—and of the multitudes in hea-
ands, whose minds are as blank and uninstructed,
it all-important theme, as if there were no mercy
heavens, or as if no Redeemer had ever come
ie world. It leads us to take a more serious and
active concern in those outcast fellow-creatures,
re living in the midst of thick darkness, and dying
the burden of unpardoned guilt; and to put forth
r energies, and to improve all our opportunities,
here may be conveyed to them that "joyful
," which tells them of the doings of God's pity
ls his fallen offspring, and of the blessedness which
; provided for the lowest, and most desolate, of
who will return to him by the way of his
itment.

Christian friends, let your souls rise in thanks-
s to that merciful Father, who has extended to
ie blessing which, in his unsearchable providence,
; denied to myriads beside. Let your gratitude
warmer still, when you meditate on your own un-
iness of such a high distinction—such an invalua-
ken of God's sovereign bounty—and muse on the
iopelessness of your condition and of your pros-
if it had not been graciously vouchsafed to you.
hen, looking beyond your own personal interests,
nbracing in your sympathies the wretched victims
orance and guilt, that people so large a portion of
obe, let your prayers ascend in their behalf to the
r of mercies, who has been so compassionate to
and ask for them the gift of that revelation of
in which you have been enabled to rejoice; and
our resolution and your purpose that you will be
zealous, more liberal, more devoted than ever, in
ndeavors to rescue sinners everywhere from the
es of their apostacy, and to impart to them the
and the elements of true blessedness, by sending
he gospel, and causing them to hear its "joyful
"

2. In the second place, to know the joyful sound, implies that we attend to the gospel, and understand it.

If those are wrong who think that men may be blessed to whom the gospel is not made known at all, those also are wrong who think that the mere circumstance of this privilege being possessed by them is altogether sufficient. That there are not a few who deceive themselves with this idea, is too manifest to be doubted. All that they rest upon is the simple fact, that God has declared himself to be merciful to sinners, and has contrived a plan by which he may consistently extend his mercy to them, and by which he has pledged and bound himself to do so. Being sure of this, they go no farther in their inquiries; they have recourse to no other ground of satisfaction and security; they give themselves no more anxiety about the matter; and go on to live as if they were now quite safe, and must at last be quite happy.

Unquestionably, however, the blessedness which they feel or anticipate, is not the blessedness predicated in the text of those who "know the joyful sound;" and if that sound has put any comfort into their hearts, their comfort being without warrant must prove vain and delusive. For, it cannot be thought that God has devised a scheme, and carried it into execution, and given it to the world in a written form, and afforded such statements and illustrations of it as we find in the inspired volume, without intending that those for whom it has been constructed, and to whom it has been transmitted, shall be careful to make themselves conversant not only with its general design, but also with its particular import, and with its various departments, and its various bearings. His intention is clearly evinced by these things, even though there had been no express call upon us to take heed to what he has made such sacrifices to accomplish, and has been so kind and condescending as to communicate. To be content, therefore, with the bare existence of the gospel scheme, and *to pay no* regard to the meaning of the gospel revela-

tion, is an act of contempt or ingratitude toward God—the slightest indications of whose will are deserving of profound attention, and who, in the exercise both of grace and authority, has made a full disclosure of what he has compassionately done for our guilty race. And what sort of blessedness can it be that stands connected with conduct so unworthy, and that is derived, as it were, from the very dispensation with respect to which the unworthy conduct is exhibited? Or how can any one rationally expect to participate in that peculiar blessedness, in this world or in the next, which it is the very object of the gospel to confer, when he thus treats its divine record with indifference and disdain, and sets at nought the evident appointments of its great and merciful Author?

And moreover, we must repeat the statement, that the blessedness flowing from the gospel is to be received and enjoyed, not by chance, or according to human fancy and caprice, but in a certain instituted way. It is not bestowed upon all indiscriminately, whatever be their dispositions their principles or their conduct, and in whatever manner, or to whatever extent, or on whatever terms they are willing to accept it. We cannot separate it from that spiritual instrumentality, of which it is the natural or the destined result. The two things are indissolubly united; and the result cannot be obtained unless the instrumentality is made to work according to the will of him who formed it. There is a plan by which this blessedness is secured for the sinner, so far as to be brought within his reach; and there is a plan by which it is made over to him as an actual and personal attainment. And as it could have had no reality, if the former plan had not been executed and fulfilled, so it can have no practical application, and cannot become a matter of experience, unless the latter plan be acquiesced in, and adhered to. Besides, if this plan be not studied and comprehended, how can any individual so betake himself to it, and so make use of its provisions, and so submit to its direction and influence, as

that he may reasonably expect to derive the benefit which it will contribute effectually to his safety and happiness? In this case it is impossible for him to and to become that which it, as an economy of gra requires him to do and to become; and therefore, i equally impossible for him to receive, or to enjoy, w it promises to bestow on such only as yield themsel to its requisitions. All that it proposes to effect in nature and character—all that it prescribes as to bel and regeneration, and prayer, and obedience, necessa remains a dead letter, for he neither knows nor unc stands it: and, consequently, it is no less idle than i presumptuous in him to lay a flattering unction to soul, and to be gladdened by the gospel sound. T Israelites would neither have been comforted nor t mated by the sound of the silver trumpets, if they l not been previously made acquainted with its pre meaning and intent; and if they had not also con ered it as connected with that system of divine mana ment and guidance under which the Almighty l placed them. No more can any one rightly appro ate to himself the peace, and the felicity, which t gospel message announces, unless he perceive the d of that message, and its exact bearing on what he and on what he is to do, and its relation to his subst tial interests, as well as to his essential character. long as he is not aware of these things, the message the gospel is not, warrantably, a joyful sound to hi and it cannot make him truly blessed, with whate frequency, and with whatever seriousness, he n hear it.

The same view is to be taken, and the same ju ment formed, of those, who, though they study the g pel, study it on wrong principles—who are conver with the scriptures which unfold it, but have embra unsound and partial notions of its leading truths—w can declaim eloquently, and reason ingeniously, many parts of it, but who have so misapprehended, t so perverted these, as to render them inadequate to

urpose which the author of salvation intended them to bserve. We do not, by any means, assert that every roneous conception of the gospel message is thus fatal the joy of him who entertains it. Many mistakes ay be committed, without affecting our interest in the lvation which it proclaims, or our share in the bless- lness which it imparts. And when these mistakes are mmitted in spite of sincere, and strenuous, and prayer- l efforts to acquire a spiritual discernment of it, we ould be sorry were we obliged to affix to them any vere or rigorous penalty. But while none of them is be palliated or thought lightly of in any circumstances, d while they are all to be condemned—if they be the nsequences of wilful opposition, or contemptuous in- ifference to what God has been pleased to declare for e instruction of those whom he addresses—there are rtain errors which, being attached to the very vitals of hristianity as a system of redemption, cannot be main- ined and acted upon, without cutting up our hope and r happiness by the very roots; and which force on us e conviction that these deadly effects must only be the rer, by their flowing from a total carelessness about derstanding what it is of such vast importance rightly d thoroughly to comprehend. Numerous examples f this may be adduced.

By not sufficiently studying the gospel message, you ay have been brought to shrink from the idea of Christ's inity, and to reduce him to the level of a mere crea- re. But, if this be your view of the Saviour, and if ou act upon it, you cannot be blessed; for not only do ou thus allow the suggestions of proud and carnal rea- n to lord it over the lessons and the dictates of revela- n, but you give your homage and your trust to one ho, while he is a redeemer of your own creation, has power to sustain the burden of your guilt, or to lead ou a single step onward to glory.

Again, by not sufficiently studying the gospel, you ve come, perhaps, to the conclusion that, to be justi- ed and reconciled to God, you must depend upon your

own righteousness. Holding this doctrine, then, and acting upon it, you cannot be blessed; for the real and saving truth is, that "by the deeds of the law, no flesh living can be justified,"—that the blotting out of sin is exclusively an achievement of the cross—and that peace with God is attainable only through faith in the atonement and obedience of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Again, by not sufficiently studying the gospel message, you have, it may be, formed an opinion that Christ is not only your righteousness, but your sanctification, in such a sense as to supersede the necessity of a personal conformity to the divine will. And holding such a tenet, and acting upon it, you cannot be blessed; for the authentic and unchangeable truth is, that a renewal of the moral nature is indispensable—that nothing can cancel our obligations to serve God with the whole heart—and that "without holiness no man can see the Lord."

Once more, though satisfied that both Christ's righteousness, and your own personal righteousness are necessary, each of them in its own proper place, and for its own proper end, yet, by not sufficiently studying the gospel message, you may be holding the sentiment that to aim at a participation in the one, and to labor for the cultivation of the other, in virtue of your own independent strength, is sufficient for ensuring your success in both objects. And, if this be your view, and if you act upon it, you cannot be blessed; for it is a fundamental principle of the gospel, that "of yourselves you can do nothing"—that "faith is the gift of God"—and that it is the agency of his Spirit which creates the clean heart, and gives its issues in a holy life.

It is clear then, that to know the sound of the gospel, so that men may be made joyful and blessed by it, they must have a right and adequate understanding of what it is—of what it presents to them—of what it exacts from them—and of what it promises to bestow upon them.

To you, my Christian friends, to whom the gospel is precious, and who have been made blessed by listening to its joyful sound, the illustrations now given may be

unnecessary, but they are unnecessary to you only because your experience has long since convinced you of their conclusiveness, and their truth. You can bear your testimony to this, that so long as you were ignorant of the gospel scheme, you were strangers to the comfort, and peace, and joy, with which its message is fraught—that these never entered your minds, till you saw its wise and compassionate bearing on your spiritual condition—and that they have been relished and augmented in proportion as you have, from a deeper, and more accurate, and more lengthened inquiry into its nature and properties, seen ground for admitting its wonderful adaptation to your circumstances, and learned from it those lessons, by which it is so perfectly fitted to regulate both your faith and your practice. And I am confident that—not merely out of reverence for its adorable Author, but also from a conviction that your blessedness must be continued and enhanced, by preserving and by adding to the knowledge of it which you have already acquired—it will be your business to seek after a still clearer, and still profounder insight into its mysteries; and to find, in that growing acquaintance with the unspotted and inexhaustible excellence by which it is pervaded, more abundant reason to rejoice in it, as the covenant of your peace, as the gospel of your salvation, as the charter of your happiness.

And understanding the gospel message for yourselves, you will be anxious to convey it to others; and to convey it to them, not as the theme of a vague speculation, or as the object of a general and indiscriminating belief, but in its real and distinctive characters, and as containing those instructive and life-giving truths which constitute its power of sending forth a "joyful sound," and of contributing to the spiritual blessedness of its votaries. Far from being contented with sending to them Christianity, and with seeing them embrace it, in any shape whatever, as if its mere name were sufficient to charm away sin and secure salvation, you will be anxious that they should receive it in all its doctrinal

purity, and entertain the most correct conceptions of every thing within it, and concerning it, on which God has been pleased to disclose his will. And, especially, will you be desirous of representing it to them, and enforcing it upon them, as a system suited in all respects to their condition, as the guilty and depraved and helpless subjects of God's moral government—a system, in which they may behold man's moral distemper as a sinner, cared for and remedied by a Physician of unerring skill and almighty power—a system, wherein they may behold the justice of God, which their trespasses had so greatly offended, reconciled with the mercy of God, which their misery so absolutely needed—a system, in which they may behold such a sacrifice offered, such a ransom paid, such a work accomplished, as make it consistent with all the attributes of Deity to rescue transgressors from death, and conduct them to glory—a system, in which they may behold a foundation for all the hopes that they need to build upon it, and which, the longer that they survey its dimensions, and the more narrowly that they examine its materials and its structure, will approve itself the more to their judgment and their taste, as entitled to their highest admiration and their most unlimited confidence.

Alas! how many are there among us, and in the world around us, whom the sound of the gospel has reached, and by whom the profession of the gospel is publicly made; but who are either indifferent as to what creed respecting it they adopt, or strong in their attachment to doctrines which are equally contradictory to its announcements, and dangerous to man's salvation! Let these persons be partakers of your spiritual sympathy and commiseration. Never regard their errors with apathy, or treat them with unconcern. Let your pity for their souls, and your jealousy for the truth as it is in Jesus, lead you to take an interest in their case, as one of serious moment to themselves, and to the church, and to the world. Strive by your testimony, your counsel, your prayers, your employment and application

of all competent means, to enlighten and reclaim them. And think not that your duty is performed, or your benevolence exhausted, so long as you can do any thing by which they may be brought to a more perfect understanding of the gospel, and made to enter more intelligently, more feelingly, and more thoroughly into the spirit of the declaration which says, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound."

3. In the third and last place, to know the joyful sound, implies that we welcome, believe, and obey the gospel.

It is very possible to hear the message of the gospel, and to understand its meaning, and yet to be destitute of the blessedness, which it is designed by its Author, and calculated in its own nature, to impart. In that case, it is the hearing of the external ear, and nothing else; or it is the understanding of mere intellect, and nothing else: and if sense and speculation, and nothing else, be concerned in the regards which are paid to the gospel, or in the effects which it produces on those to whom it is addressed, I know of no authority in its own record, and of no warrant in the reason and propriety of the thing itself, for feeling, or for cherishing, any emotions of gladness. On the contrary, that privilege is directly discouraged—it is expressly denied—with respect to those who merely listen to what the gospel says to them, or merely take a transient and distant survey of its plan, or merely possess the faculty of talking and arguing and conjecturing about the doctrines and statements which it contains. If we rest satisfied with such naked and superficial regards as these; if we go no deeper into the subject; if we come into no closer contact with it; if we take no livelier nor more personal interest in it; then we treat the gospel as of no substantial value; we disallow its most obvious and peremptory claims; we neglect its most important character; we act towards it as if it were a system of mere human wisdom, or the creation of mere human fancy; and thus refusing whatever is due to its divine

excellence, and to its no less divine authority, we forego, by just and necessary consequence, whatever it proffers to us of rest and happiness. What! my friends, can you really feel the blessedness derived from the gospel, when yet you account its message of so little moment, though it tells you of a great salvation wrought out for you by the Son of God, that you will give it no welcome into your hearts, and no cherished residence there? Can the sound of the gospel be verily joyful to you, when you will not meet its announcements with an humble and cordial belief, although these are the announcements of eternal truth—"faithful sayings," and therefore "worthy of all acceptation?" And can the gospel fill your mind with gladness, or visit you with one happy emotion, when you withhold, at once so undutifully, and so ungratefully, that obedience which it not only positively commands and affectionately entreats, but also most explicitly and inseparably conjoins with all the good which it promises to bestow? To those who, in this manner, put the gospel away from them, or who use it as a mere exercise for their reason, or as the mere plaything of their imagination, it can speak no joy; upon them it will confer no blessedness.

O what numbers are there, by whom it is thus dishonorably treated, or practically despised; and who yet seem to flatter themselves that all is well with their souls, who speak of their state before God with ease and satisfaction, and rejoice confidently in the anticipations of a better world! Alas! how blinded are they by the ignorance that is in them to the realities of their spiritual condition! Would they but study the constitution, and give heed to the language, of the gospel; would they but attend to the stress which it lays upon the connexion that subsists between character and privilege, between faith and peace, between holiness and happiness, between immortality and meetness for it; would they but give credit to what it declares concerning the demerit, and the danger, and the ultimate fate of such as they are—how would all their joyfulness vanish

away as a dream of the night, and give place to fear and anguish and tribulation! And how would that sound which has played about their ear as the sound of blessedness, be converted into the voice of indignation and terror—uttered, too, by the God of all grace, but whose grace, as manifested and embodied in the gospel, has been lightly esteemed, or sadly abused, and who therefore speaks in the awful accents of insulted justice and neglected mercy! Let sinners who are thus at ease in Sion, who are assured and happy in the midst of peril, who are rejoicing in a salvation which they have not yet appreciated, and which is not yet theirs, —let them consider these things, and no longer remain in the delusion with which they are now encompassed, and which must finally prove their ruin and their misery.

Yes, my Christian brethren, these men are indeed deluded; they are not the people that know the joyful sound, and are blessed. If they are so, then the gospel is a fable, salvation is a shadow, and truth has forsaken the word of God. Nay, but they *are* deluded—we know they are deluded—grossly, grievously, fatally deluded. May the Lord himself deliver, and restore, and save them!

And be you humble, and be you thankful, that, instead of having your lot with them, you are, in very deed, of those that are blessed by having "known the joyful sound." Be humble, when you recollect and meditate on your utter unworthiness of such a distinguished privilege. And be thankful to Him, by whose undeserved mercy you have been called to the participation and enjoyment of it. To you it has been given to "know the joyful sound"—to give a cordial reception to the message which it brings, because it is fraught with innumerable and surpassing benefits—to exercise a strong and lively faith in it, because it rests upon the testimony of the true and faithful God—and to render to it a profound and practical submission, as sanctioned by an authority which the universe obeys, and enforced

by the manifestation of a love whose height and depth and breadth and length exceed all our powers of measurement. Thus have you been enabled by the power and teaching of the Spirit to listen to the sound of the gospel, and therefore to you it is a "joyful sound," it is not only calculated and intended to make you joyful, but it has actually made you joyful; as your consciousness and experience abundantly testify. And therefore are you blessed—not merely visited with gleams of passing pleasure, or with raptures which have their moment and die away, but inhabited by the peace which nothing can disturb, animated by the joy which nothing can take away, settled on the hope which already makes heaven and immortality your own.

It is a blessed thing for a man to have all his sins forgiven, and thus to be rescued from the curse of a broken law, and the apprehension of future wrath—and that blessedness is yours. It is a blessed thing for an apostate alienated creature to be reconciled to the great Creator, and in the spirit of adoption to look up to him as his Father, to whose favor he has been graciously restored, and from whom he shall be estranged no more—and that blessedness is yours. It is a blessed thing to be delivered from the tyranny of unholy passions, and from the dominion of an ungodly world, and to come into the glorious liberty of the moral nature wherewith Christ makes his people free—and that blessedness is yours. It is a blessed thing to look abroad upon the face of nature, and after gazing with a delighted eye on the beauties that adorn the earth, and on the magnificence that cover the heavens, to rejoice in them as the works of him who has called you back to the work and the privileges of his children, and to say with the glow of filial affection, "my Father made them all"—and that blessedness is yours. It is a blessed thing, amidst the trials, and difficulties, and distresses with which humanity has to struggle in this weary world, to be upheld by divine power, to be guided by infinite wisdom, to be cheered by heavenly consolations, and to gather right-

usness and joy even from the scene of tribulation in ich you dwell—and that blessedness is yours. It is blessed thing to be able to contemplate death without ing subject to the bondage of fear, to anticipate the ve as a resting-place from sin and sorrow, to lie wn in its peaceful bosom with the prospect of a resection to life and immortality—and that blessedness ours. It is a blessed thing when one looks forward the judgment and to eternity which await us all, to lize in him who is to pronounce our doom, the viour to whom we have committed the keeping of souls, and in whose blood we are already washed m our sins, and to cherish the hope founded on his n faithful promise, that the portion assigned us is erlasting life—and that blessedness is yours. And, if this state of darkness and imperfection, where our ws are too often clouded, and our faith too often ows feeble, and the heart too often forgets the rock which it has placed its confidence for eternity—if in se circumstances, it is a blessed thing to have access those ordinances which have been appointed for reshing our decayed spirits, for casting a clearer light on the path of our pilgrimage, for bringing us nearer the fountain of grace and comfort, and for reviving d strengthening "the things that are ready to die"—t blessedness also is yours.

Happy people! thus saved by the Lord—to whom joyful sound of the gospel has come, fraught with a aning and a power, and a consolation, infinitely her and more efficient than all that the sound of the er trumpets conveyed to the children of Israel as y journeyed through the wilderness—and who have t only in this agitated and sorrowful world, the peace t passeth understanding, and the joy that is unspeakle, but are soon to enter on that state of felicity, of ich you have here only a pledge and a foretaste, in ich purity untainted, and bliss unalloyed, shall cleave you in endless fellowship, and in which the fulness of ur joy shall be equalled only by the eternity of its ration.

And, surely, my Christian friends, you cannot but desire, and you cannot but endeavor, to make your fellow-men partakers of that blessedness with which you are so richly favored, by making them experimentally acquainted with that message from which alone such blessedness can proceed. I doubt not you are, more or less, engaged in advancing the spread of the gospel. But let me urge it upon you not to rest satisfied with those efforts which seem to have no higher object, and can have no other effect, than that of gaining nominal proselytes, and teaching men to conclude that they have a right to the salvation of the gospel, merely because they profess Christianity, and are acquainted with its letter, and conform to its general requisitions, though, all the while, they are destitute of its quickening spirit, and rebellious against its governing authority. You know, that from your own personal history, that this is a vital and ruinous deception, and that the gospel must be received, and confided in, and submitted to, in a far different way, before men can be truly safe, and truly happy. And, therefore, as you would be wise and consistent, as well as compassionate, in your exertions to bring them into that blessed state, see that you employ those methods which will not only make the sound of the gospel reach their ears and inform their understandings, but penetrate and subdue and pervade their hearts, and manifest itself there as a message of love, and as a message from God, in demonstration of the spirit and of power. Keep this continually in your view; pursue it with steady and unceasing aim; let it give a tone and the direction to all that you may do for evangelizing the world. And, whether you propose to send the gospel where it is altogether unknown; or whether you present it to those who have hitherto rejected the offer of it; or whether you labor for its prosperity with such as are satisfied with its outward forms, and its legal establishment; or whether you study to promote its interests among individuals, or among communities, that have *perverted its* principles, and allowed its vitality to evap-

mate: let your great and leading purpose be, to secure its entrance into the sinner's inmost soul, to win for it a triumph over the whole man, to bring all upon whom it is made to bear, to the saving belief, and willing obedience, and unspeakable enjoyment, of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ.

This, my friends, is characteristic of the Institution in whose behalf I now address you. Our object is to increase the number of the people that are blessed, because they "know the joyful sound of the gospel." And the scene in which we carry on our work of faith, and labor of love, is, as you may learn from our distinctive appellation, the Continent of Europe. We are not indifferent to the ignorance, and the error, and the sinfulness, that prevail in our native land: we regard these evils with sorrow and compassion—we rejoice in the exertions that are so zealously put forth to mitigate or remove them—and we should deem ourselves wanting in Christian love, did we not individually help forward these exertions by our co-operation and our aid. Neither are we deaf to the cry for help that comes to us from every quarter of the heathen world: the associated efforts that are every where making for rendering the name of Christ honorable, and his salvation precious among the Gentiles, fill us with unfeigned satisfaction; and far be it from any of us to refuse to that cause what our opportunities enable us to do, or what our circumstances enable us to bestow. But the population, to whose spiritual wants we are united and pledged to minister, is too interesting, and too necessitous, to be neglected, amidst the multiplied manifestations of Christian and British philanthropy. What multitudes are lying prostrate before the man of sin—the slaves of a domineering priesthood—shut out, upon system, from the fountain of divine truth—taught to build their confidence upon a foundation which cannot stand in the judgment—and involved in all the darkness, and fooleries, and impieties, and abominations of a church, which God has given over to judicial blindness, and consigned

to terrible destruction. And even of those who come out from the mystic Babylon, and taken a p against her doctrines and her dominion, what s proportion have forsaken all the truth and glory Reformation—embraced a creed from which thing is banished that makes the gospel dear to ner's heart, or honorable to a redeeming God—o into a spiritual lethargy, in which, with a name t men are sleeping the sleep of death—or avow a delity, which tramples on all the sacredness of the and, under the pretext of doing homage to its A gives its sublimest and most precious discoveries scorn of the profane, and to the laughter of the It is for the benefit of such degenerates, and such casts, and such enemies of Christianity as thes our Society has been formed, and that we cra public support. We send forth missionaries, fitt their talents, their zeal, and their character, to p the gospel of the grace of God—to lift up a test for the deity and the cross of Christ—to recal att to all that is peculiar to the gospel of salvatic assert the authority of those scriptures which have given by divine inspiration—and to teach the v of spiritual despotism, and the votaries of a false p ophy, and the crowd of deluded sinners that kno what they do, to return to the God whom they forsaken, through the Saviour whom they have des and to hear, and believe, and obey the message c gospel which alone can make them free. And t we cannot boast of any flattering measure of su and bring before you an array of converts t truth, and speak of extensive awakenings, and n inroads on the territory of sin and Satan; yet yo remember that we labor in a region where the ness may be felt, and cultivate a soil that is hard s amant, and contend with foes that struggle for er they struggle for life; and that, in spite of all difficulties and disadvantages, we can appeal to s progress in the work of evangelization, as might er

age hearts less sanguine than ours, and to prospects of increasing good, which might animate the most apathetic and desponding of those who are engaged in illuminating a benighted world.

My Christian friends, we solicit your countenance. Instead of regarding our enterprise with indifference, as if it were of a trifling character, or frowning upon it as if it were injurious, or turning away from it, as if it were hopeless, we beseech you to recollect that it concerns the souls of immortal beings—that it applies to them the means of salvation which God himself has sanctioned—and that we have reason to anticipate fruit that shall be for the divine glory and for the happiness of men. Recollecting these things, we entreat you to permit us to share in that patronage, which you so liberally bestow on the schemes and the efforts of Christian benevolence.

SERMON IV.

SPIRITUAL RENOVATION.

2 CORINTHIANS v. 17.

"*Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new c ture: old things are passed away; behold all th are become new.*"

PAUL and his brethren in the ministry had, at one riod, been influenced by secular and worldly vi They had felt a peculiar partiality for such as belo to the privileged community of the Jews; and allowed themselves to be actuated by the considera of the advantage or disadvantage likely to result f retaining or losing the friendship of their former a ciates. They had besides so far misunderstood character and kingdom of the Messiah, as to supp that he came to act the part of a temporal prince; under this impression, had not only aspired to the h ors and benefits which, in that capacity, he was exp ed to bestow, but had had their attachment to him their obedience to him, more or less governed by motives which these selfish views suggested. N however, they were completely rescued from the th dom of such debasing errors. Their ideas of outw privilege, and of true religion, and of the mission of Saviour, were divested of all that carnality by wh they had been formerly corrupted and debased. T

regarded him whose messengers they were, as a spiritual Redeemer and a spiritual King; they looked for no blessings from him, but what were connected with the welfare of the soul and with eternity. And they estimated others, not by external distinctions, nor by their power of conferring earthly good, but by the conformity of their temper and deportment to the divine will, and by their having undergone that renovation of the heart and life, which is the true glory, and the true happiness of man. "Wherefore, henceforth know we no man after the flesh; yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." And so will it be, not merely with apostles, but with all who understand the nature, and feel the power, and partake of the salvation of the gospel. "For if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."

1. In the *first* place, the text intimates, that a great moral change in the sinner is necessary. This is evident from the state in which man is every where found, and in which the Bible uniformly represents him to be. He is in a state not merely of guilt and condemnation, which requires for him the exercise of pardoning mercy, that he may not be forever miserable; but also of depravity and corruption, from which he must be rescued, otherwise he can never attain to the true honor of his nature, or enjoy communion with God upon earth, or become a partaker of the happiness that is in heaven. Nothing is more obvious to every intelligent observer, and nothing is more plainly taught in revelation, than that he is a fallen creature; and that one effect of his fall, is to be discovered in his want of original righteousness, his disinclination to obey the divine will, and his aptness to indulge in unholy pursuits and unholy pleasures. Even when placed in the most favorable circumstances, with every motive to do what is good, and every facility for avoiding what is evil, how perversely does he choose to gratify his passions and appetites, rather

than submit them to the control of God's law; how easily and willingly does he become a prey to those temptations by which he is assailed; and how frequently does he prefer vice to virtue, in spite of all the restraints that worldly, as well as higher considerations, impose upon his conduct! The wicked habits he forms by such a course of transgression, clearly and unquestionably demand a change; because as long as they prevail over him, he cannot reach either the glory or the felicity, to which he was primarily destined, and to which it is the great object of Christianity to restore him. But, independently of these habits, which have so obtained the mastery over him as to incapacitate him for pure and celestial enjoyment, and which must therefore be eradicated and made to give place to habits of an opposite description, the very dispositions in which they originate, the inherent propensities which have produced and nourished them, are such, that they must undergo an alterative process, before the individual who owns them can be either truly holy, or truly blessed; or, in other words, be invested with that character which he lost by the apostacy of the first Adam, and which he is to regain by the interposition of the second. Nay, though we should see in him none of those deeds of impiety, or licentiousness, into which it is the natural tendency of all men to fall; and though we should trace none of that decided bias to sinful gratification, which, nevertheless, lurks in every human breast; though we should witness many amiable feelings at work, and many actions that are equally useful and praiseworthy; still, it will not be difficult in all this, to perceive the absence of that principle, without which the strictest and most literal performance of duty, is nothing better than ungodliness—the principle, I mean, which recognises the authority of God, and, in the absence of which, there can be nothing good or acceptable in his sight. And here too, he must be changed so far as to have this great fundamental principle implanted and established in him, instead of that mere constitu-

tional amiableness, or that mere worldly virtue, which bears the semblance, but has none of the reality, and none of the truth of true holiness; and which, much as it may be esteemed by short sighted mortals, has no value in the regard of Him, whose approbation is the only standard of moral excellence, and the only fountain of spiritual blessedness.

In these respects, and for these reasons, there must be a great moral change effected, in every man to whose salvation the gospel is ultimately available. This we cannot doubt, when we look to the condition from which it proposes to deliver him, as contrasted with that to which it proposes to bring him—the character which it ascribes to him in his natural state, as compared with the character in which it clothes him after he is subjected to divine influence. The scriptures speak of it, indeed, in plain and emphatic terms, refer to it frequently as of peculiar moment, and proceed upon it as an essential truth. Nor do they mention it as something which must pass upon persons of a particular temperament of mind, or of a particular description of character, and from which all others may consider themselves as exempted; but as that which is indispensable for every individual of the human race, as that, in short, which is commensurate with the extent of the fall and with the prevalence of sin. But, indeed, that the change we speak of is more or less necessary for every one, is generally admitted; the error which prevails respecting it, has reference chiefly to its nature and degree. It is allowed that every one must be changed in some respect or other. This one, we are told, must get rid of a certain vicious propensity; and that one must renounce a certain vicious practice. And, when the reformation specified has actually taken place, the very language of our text is employed to describe the change, and the person by whom it has been experienced is denominated "a new creature." Now all this arises from having very inadequate notions of man's state by nature, of that which he is required to become,

and of the doctrine of the Bible, as to the important change in question. And therefore we remark,

2. In the *second* place, that the moral change which every sinner must undergo, is comprehensive, thorough, and pervading.

Those imperfect views of it, to which I have adverted, are so contradictory to every thing that we are taught in the Bible, and indeed, so much at variance with what we may gather from the history and appearances of human nature, as it is every where exhibited in the world, in relation to what it ought to be both as to purity and enjoyment, that we can impute them to nothing so much as to that spiritual blindness—that obduracy of heart—that very love of sin, and aversion to goodness, which make the change we speak of so requisite, and which may be regarded as an additional proof and illustration of its necessity. Look into the inspired volume, and see the account which it gives of man as a fallen being; and having pondered upon that, judge whether the change can be either partial or superficial, which terminates in a character so abhorrent of what is base, and so distinguished by "whatsoever is true, and pure, and lovely, and of good report," as is the character of the real Christian. Nothing can be more degenerate than the one; nothing more perfect in its principles, or more exalted in its tendencies and aspirations, than the other. There cannot be a greater contrariety between two things, than between the soul that is alienated in all its affections and operations, from him who is "glorious in holiness," and the soul whose every feeling, and faculty, and movement, are so consecrated to that great Being, as to render it like unto himself.

Again, consider the similitudes by which the scriptures express not merely the reality, but the greatness of this change. It is represented as the "coming out of a darkness" so gross, that the sinner, while in it, can scarcely discern right from wrong, and cannot walk a step in the path of acceptable obedience—into a "light"

s clear and "marvellous," that points out all his
o heaven, and that, "shineth more and more unto
erfect day." It is represented as "a resurrection"
the dead; from a state in which all the sinner's
s and susceptibilities are dead to God, buried in
rave of corruption, and incapable of one holy
or of a single becoming emotion—to a state in
he becomes alive to all that is great and good,
rom the tomb where he lay amidst rottenness and
ity, throws off the fetters which enchained his
es, is animated with the love of righteousness, and
abroad refreshed by the breath of heaven, and
ng in the bliss of a new-born existence. It is
ented as a new birth; in which the defects and
nities of the Christian's former self are not al-
to have any place; by which he enters into a
orld, and begins a new course; and from which
generated nature, though commencing with the
ess of infancy, will grow up to the vigor and
e and measure of a perfect man. And in my
t is represented as a fresh creation—intimating
y, that the elements of the Christian's moral na-
are modelled and organized anew—that, from
department of his being, there is excluded what-
ad formerly defaced its beauty, or deranged its
ure, or perverted its use—that the whole man is
d agreeably to the will of the great Creator, con-
ed to his service, and honored with his residence.
ese representations demonstrate the vastness and
leteness of the change that is wrought in the sin-
hen he is converted to God; and must prevent
considerate person from thinking lightly of it, as
ould be easily made, or required few sacrifices, or
nded no great anxiety about its accomplishment.
show such a total revolution of character to be
sary, as proves that a great proportion of those
latter themselves that they have undergone it, are
cherishing a delusion, which, in the end, must
as ruinous as it is vain; and they warn us all to

take heed to ourselves, and not to be satisfied, as we are too apt to be, with mere appearances—with partial symptoms—with outward and compromising amendments—with any thing, in short, that does not go to the very root of the matter, and give evidence that whatsoever constitutes man a moral and accountable being has been so transformed as to make us willingly subject to the Father of our spirits.

In his Epistle to the Ephesians, (iv. 22.) the Apostle Paul gives a short, but comprehensive description of this process, from which you may learn what is implied in becoming a new creature. "That ye put off, concerning the former conversation, the old man, which is corrupt, according to the deceitful lusts; and be renewed in the spirit of your minds; and that ye put on the new man, which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness." In these words, there is set before you, by means of a strong figure, the transition you are to make, the character you are to renounce, and that which in its stead you are to embrace and cultivate. You are to "put off as respects your former conversation," or the conduct which you maintained when you were heathen or unregenerate, "the old man"—the vicious nature, from which that conduct proceeded, and which is so essentially and wholly corrupted as to be full of the inordinate desires that deceive those who yield to them, and drown them in perdition, by leading to all manner of sinful indulgence—you must put off this depraved nature, as you would throw away a garment which is polluted, torn, disgraceful and useless. And so thorough must this renunciation of "the old man" be, that you must be "renewed in the spirit of your mind;" you must not be reformed merely, but "renewed;" you must be renewed not merely in external manners, "but in your mind;" and you must be renewed not simply in the general disposition of your mind, but in its very "spirit"—in that which gives the tone to your whole temper, and goes forth with its practical influences into the whole tenor of your de-

nent; and which, according as it is good or bad, ender you an object either of sore displeasure or ind regard to him who is your Ruler and your e: and having renounced the old man—those pur- and pleasures in which you formerly delighted; having been made new in your inmost heart, and l the springs of action, you must "put on the new "—you must maintain and cultivate that character ich, after God"—in obedience to his will, in con- ity to his example, in furtherance of his glory, and e exercise of his grace, "is created" or formed, so exhibit the various excellencies which are com- d "in righteousness and true holiness"—the holi- which consists in obedience to the will of God, r the operation of those principles and motives h are prescribed in the word of God. You must t on this new man," as you would put on a garment h will cover your whole person; a garment so tiful as to please the eye of him whom it is your lege to serve upon earth, and so becoming and suf- at as to fit you for sitting down at that divine feast h he has prepared for you in heaven.

he magnitude of the change implied in the sinner ming "a new creature" may also be inferred, from ature of the agency by which it is effected. The mations and amendments of character with which any are ready to be satisfied, as all that God re- es of them, need no extraordinary means to bring about. It is generally enough for that purpose, ly to yield to the power of a worldly or selfish mo- —to give up one secular advantage in exchange for her—to check a propensity, or renounce an indul- e, which was injuring our earthly prospects and oaching on our own scheme of earthly happiness— thus to be all the while retaining the objects of our inal attachments, and only varying the mode of grat- g our corrupt desires. The intemperate man may me sober, only to economise his substance and e his health, which he may devote to indulgences

not one whit more innocent than those he has forsaken. The dishonest man may cease from fraud and robbery, merely that he may escape punishment from men, and be free to engage in other practices, in which he as little acknowledges the divine authority, or the welfare of his fellow-creatures. And the openly profane and irreligious may desist from taking God's name in vain, and no longer neglect God's ordinances, that, by this means, he may acquire a reputation for piety, and commit, under the hypocrite's guise, what he found it unsafe or inconvenient to commit in the eye of the world. But in all these, and in all similar cases, there is not even an approximation to the self-denial and the unreserved devotedness of "the new creature;" the ungodliness of the fallen nature remains uncorrected and unsubdued; it runs merely in other channels and displays itself in other forms; and the "old man" is as powerful and as rampant as ever. But when the sinner becomes "a new creature," his love and his hatred are inverted; what he once loved he now hates, and what he once hated he now loves. His decided and paramount inclination is to serve, to obey, and to glorify God, instead of surrendering himself to the world and to sin. His "delight is in the law of the Lord after the inward man," and on that law he meditates with unfeigned satisfaction—"esteeming all its commandments concerning all things to be right." There is implanted in him such a hatred of sin that he loathes it in all its aspects, renounces all the habits in which it had predominated, and abstains from all the indulgences to which it had allured him; and in short it becomes the ruling desire of his heart, and the unceasing pursuit of his life, that he may be "perfect as a man of God, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works."

And the change which all this implies, is such as to baffle every effort of his own independent power: before it commences, he has no wish that it should take place, nor when it begins is he able of himself to carry it on: if left to himself, he would remain forever "in the

bitterness and in the bond of iniquity." It is the of the Almighty which is employed to create him

He, who at first "moved upon the face of the " to reduce the dark and void, and formless mass er and to beauty, puts forth his energies on the of the sinner's soul, to rescue it from darkness, mult, and misrule—to make it the habitation of nd life—and to consecrate it as a fit temple for rship, and service, and enjoyment of that God presence filleth all in all. Such is the native re- of his heart, that it cannot be overcome but by irit of the Most High. Such is the difficulty of ; him a willing and obedient subject to the divine ment, that it must be surmounted by an arm is resistless. Such is the difference between artial ameliorations of character, and the grand l renovation of which our text speaks, that, while mer may take place in a thousand cases by the se of natural strength, and even by the impulse of hy motives, the latter cannot be accomplished, a single case, without the application of omni- e—without the contrivances of infinite wisdom— t the influences of a holiness which belongs to no d being. Surely, then, we must conclude, that ral change which a man undergoes when he be- a new creature, must be no light matter—no concern; it must be worthy of that agency which in motion to produce, and to mature it; it must vast magnitude—of incalculable importance—of nsable necessity.

Now, let me state, in the *third* and *last* place, being a new creature," and "being in Christ," eparably connected.

amazing and melancholy how sinners deceive lves in respect to this point. They admit the f the proposition now stated; but then, they so nd they so apply it, as to acquire a notion of their afety which the real facts of their condition and of haracter will, by no means, warrant. Some, who

have altered their moral conduct for the better, in certain points, which arrest the attention, and secure the favorable testimony of their fellow-men, infer from this, that they are "in Christ," and are consequently entitled to count on their eternal salvation as secure. Others, again, think that they are "in Christ," because they have assumed his name, and professed his gospel, and are ready to defend the truth of his religion; and then conclude that they have certainly experienced the renewal which is necessary, and are therefore quite fit for heaven, and sure of reaching it. And some, who belong to the visible church of Christ, and can also point to the abandonment of what was immoral in their former practice, take advantage of both circumstances, and feel that they have a double title to congratulate themselves on the safety of their present state, and on the happiness of their future prospects.

All who think and reason thus are laboring under a grievous delusion. Doubtless, whosoever is in Christ is a new creature, and whosoever is a new creature is in Christ. But, before you can rest upon such inferences as sound and legitimate, you must ascertain the reality of the facts from which you draw them: this you should be careful to do, by comparing your opinion of yourselves with what the Scriptures teach; and you should, on no account come to a favorable conclusion merely because it is pleasing and satisfactory, but only when you are authorized to do so by the truth of the case, as determined by the unerring word of God.

You know what that word says respecting the nature and extent of the moral change implied in your being new creatures. Bring your character, then, to the test. See whether it corresponds with the character which inspiration delineates as comprised in, or as derived from a renewal of the mind—whether it is so deep as to comprehend your spirit and your principles—whether it is so unreserved as to leave no department under the dominion of sin—whether it is so universal as that "*all* old things are passed away, and *all* things are become

—whether "old things" are deserted because you
nscious of a rooted dislike to them, on account of
nherent turpitude, their contrariety to God's will,
endency to dishonor and to destroy your souls—and
er "all things are become new,"—the principles
ich you act—the motives by which you are in-
ed—the ends and objects you pursue—the rules
ich you are governed—the pursuits in which you
our comfort—the companions with whom you
ate—the hopes by which you are animated. In-
into the subject thus strictly, and thus thoroughly,
ou will be able with little difficulty to discover,
ar you are warranted to believe that you have
erest in Christ, and are partakers of his great
on.

t never forget, in the midst of all your investiga-
that there can be no new creation unless you be
hrist"—unless you truly believe in him—unless
e united to him, by virtue of that faith which re-
him, and relies upon him, and submits to him as
Saviour. All spiritual blessings come from him.
ut of that sufficiency and fulness which it hath
d the Father should dwell in him, that you are
ive whatever is needful to make you safe, or holy,
py. And it is distinctly taught in the gospel record,
ne purpose for which he gave himself to suffer-
d to death, was your deliverance from the slavery
—your renewal after the divine image—your res-
n to that personal holiness, without which all
gifts are without meaning, and without avail.
this effect is to be produced by that alliance to
hich faith constitutes and maintains, which makes
art of his mystical body, and which operates by
g from him, as your spiritual head, that life of
you are naturally destitute, and the nourishment
ich it is to be supported, and strengthened, and
ed. Do not therefore imagine that you either are,
be, new creatures, unless you are "in Christ,"

as we have now described. There is such a thing a being "in Christ" by external profession, and extern privilege. You may be thus "in Christ," as unfruitfi and unhealthy branches are sometimes found in the vine But you must be "in Christ" in another way,—eve by becoming one with him, through the vital power o faith—just as the branches, which, being grafted int the true vine, not only send forth leaves, and exhib blossoms, but produce good fruit in abundance. Ou of Christ altogether, or "in Christ" only in name an appearance, you can have no life in your souls, and ca do nothing that is good. It is only when you are "i Christ," according to the spiritual meaning of tha phrase, that your heart can be renovated, that the ol man can be exchanged for the new, that there can b a willing, an unreserved, a devoted consecration of you powers and affections to the service of him by whon you have been redeemed, and that, instead of bein withered and barren, and fit to be cut down, an burned, you can flourish and grow up in the garden o the Lord, and bring forth plentifully those "fruits o righteousness, which are by Christ Jesus to the glor and the praise of God."

Let sinners, then, who would turn from the evil o their ways and live, be impressed with this great truth that there is no redemption for them, which does no embrace the renewal of their minds and characters; and that this is no more to be obtained than pardon an reconciliation, except through the cross and the Spiri of Christ. It is by Jesus that they must be turne from their iniquities. They must be "created again in Christ Jesus unto good works." And therefore, let them flee to Christ, and embrace him, and cleave to him, by a living faith. And let believers, while they give thanks to the Redeemer by whom they have been made new creatures, remember, that it is by the same Redeemer that they are to be maintained in the regenerated state into which he has brought them, and tha

their sanctification is to be carried on till they are ripe for immortality. Let them, therefore, be exhorted to live continually by faith in Christ; to have recourse to him, at all times, as the fountain of moral purity; and to apply with "all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," for those communications of his grace, which shall strengthen what is weak, and perfect what is lacking in them, till they enter where "nothing that defileth" shall ever enter, and become "partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

SERMON V.

THE TESTIMONY OF CONSCIENCE.

2 CORINTHIANS i. 12.

"*For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward.*"

WERE I to put the question to any one, What is it that you rejoice in as the ground of your hope and confidence towards God? and were he to answer, The testimony of a good conscience,—I should not merely stand in doubt of that person, but maintain that he was building on an unscriptural and insufficient foundation, and that the whole superstructure he had erected upon it would be destroyed in the great day of the Lord. All that you have done, my friends, and all that it is possible for you to do, will never amount to a justifying righteousness; for "by the deeds of the law," you are assured, "that no flesh living can be justified." The only ground of hope and confidence towards God, that you are warranted, or that it is safe for you, to rest upon, is the righteousness of the Redeemer, which is not only perfect, in its nature and extent, but divinely appointed, and divinely held forth, as alone adequate to that important purpose. Whatever be the attainments

you have made, and whatever the progress you may be competent to make, in obedience to the law of God, it would be madness to rejoice in these, as if they had virtue to secure for you forgiveness and eternal life. And more especially, would it be madness, as you would be thereby neglecting a method of salvation as sure and efficacious as the word of omnipotence can make it. No: my brethren; it is your safety, it is your duty, and it is your privilege, to "rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, and to have no confidence in the flesh."

But, then, it may be asked, is it an unlawful thing in any circumstances, or in any view, to rejoice in the "testimony of a good conscience?" We cannot say so, when we look to the language of the text, and consider it as the language of an inspired apostle. Even though there had been no such express declaration on the subject, and though apostolic experience and example had been wanting, such rejoicing would have been justifiable on the obvious analogy, and essential doctrine, of Scripture. For "a good conscience," or "a conscience void of offence," is that which divine authority requires of us, and is a possession well-pleasing in the divine regard. And to know, or feel, that we have it, must be a source of satisfaction and happiness. It supposes us to be adorned with much that is amiable, much that is respectable, much that assimilates us to God; and therefore, to derive no gratification from the fact, would amount to an insensibility to moral excellence, and would violate a settled and important principle in our moral nature. A good conscience moreover, can never speak the same language, nor excite the same emotions, as a bad conscience: to derive happiness, therefore, from the approving testimony of the former, seems as unavoidable as to experience misery from the condemning sentence of the latter. But the words of the apostle, as descriptive of his own state of mind, supersede the necessity of all argument on the subject. For were the thing wrong, unsuitable

to the true Christian, or inconsistent with sound doctrine, he and his brethren never could have indulged in it, as they are here represented to have done; nor would they have recorded it, for the edification and encouragement of others, as that which constituted any portion of their happiness. No person could be more humble than Paul, under a sense of natural depravity and actual guilt. No person could more distinctly and forcibly teach the doctrine of man's utter destitution of every thing on which reliance could be placed for taking away sin, and securing the divine favor. No person could hold forth Christ more singly and exclusively as the Saviour, in whom alone transgressors of mankind can find pardon, and peace, and blessedness. And no person could more fondly, more devotedly, more confidently, or more rapturously cling to Christ and him crucified, as all his salvation and all his desire. And yet he and his fellow-laborers, who were like-minded with himself on that all-important subject, declare, without any apprehension of being misunderstood, or of being accounted heterodox, "Our rejoicing is this, even the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward."

The two causes of rejoicing, therefore, must be perfectly harmonious; and both may operate without any interference of the one with the other, and without detracting either from the character, or from the safety, of the individual who is affected by them.

This text may be considered, *first*, as applied to Paul. He had labored much in behalf of the Corinthian church, with a view to instruct and confirm it in the faith of the gospel. And his labor had not been in vain; for, through his instrumentality, and by the blessing of God, it exhibited many examples of unwavering belief, of sincere piety, of practical godliness, of invincible patience, of Christian consolation and joyfulness. But still there were not wanting some who requited all

that he did for its prosperity, with groundless prejudices, uncharitable suspicions, and ungenerous reproaches. He was spoken of, as if he had been actuated by mercenary or ambitious motives, and as if, under the guise of pious zeal, and spiritual benevolence, he had been all the while pursuing his own purposes of selfishness and aggrandizement. No species of treatment could be more offensive and galling than this. It wounded the best sensibilities of his heart. It tended to injure his reputation, and diminish his success. And had it not been counteracted by a consciousness of its injustice, as well as by superior influence, it must have gone far, not only to augment his present distress, but also to discourage his future efforts. And what was it that supported and consoled him amidst the cruel surmises and bitter calumnies to which he was exposed, even from the men to whom he had been administering the benefits of Christianity? It was the feeling and impression of his innocence. No doubt he was visited with the solacing and upholding communications of the divine Spirit; but these would not have been vouchsafed, if he had been really chargeable with the base and worldly views that were imputed to him. And then to all the evils resulting from what he suffered, in consequence of the things that were alleged against the purity of his intentions, there would have been added remorse and self-condemnation, for being in his own knowledge and conviction, the worldling, or the hypocrite, which his enemies reported him to be. But, instead of having such an intolerable aggravation of his outward trials, he had at once the negative consolation that he was falsely accused, and the positive and substantial consolation, which flowed from the witness of his own mind, that, in the sight of God, he possessed that uprightness of design, and that integrity of conduct, for which he did not obtain credit with men. And the consolation thus afforded him, not merely soothed and sustained him when suffering from the ingratitude, the evil imaginings, and slanderous sayings of those who should have

known him better and loved him more; it elevated him above the obloquy wherewith he was assailed—made him lightly esteem, or altogether forget, the afflictions that beset him—and, amidst evils that would otherwise have depressed him with sorrow, not only enabled him to rise superior to their influence, but filled his soul with gladness. He rejoiced in this, that he had the favorable "testimony of his own conscience," to set against the censures and accusations of ignorant, misjudging, or malicious men. His conscience testified, that, in every period, and in every department of his labors, he had acted with "simplicity"—with a single desire to glorify his Redeemer, and benefit the souls of men;—that he was not dissembling, with a view to impose upon his fellow-creatures, but had that "sincerity" which was produced and nourished by a sense of God's holy presence, and which constrained him to avoid every false and wicked way, and to speak, and to live, with the unfeigned purpose of doing what was right;—that he was not governed by the "wisdom" which is concerned in providing for the "flesh," which seeks for carnal qualifications, which aims at worldly possessions, which has some sinister end to answer, even when professing to be devoted solely to spiritual pursuits, and to be wrapt in the contemplation of heavenly objects,—but that, on the contrary, he was influenced and regulated by "divine grace," on which he humbly depended, for which he habitually prayed, and to which he cheerfully submitted, as that which alone could purify him from the corruption of his own heart, fortify him against the assaults of temptation, raise him above all those little considerations of fame, and power, and vanity, and ease, by which even good men are too apt to be swayed, and render his "conversation honest in the sight of all men," by rendering it conformable throughout to the will of that God who requires "truth in the inward parts," as well as consistency and impartiality of obedience in the external conduct. And, while the apostle rejoiced in the testimony of his conscience, that

this had been his manner of life in general, while performing his official duties as a minister of Christ, he rejoiced, in a particular manner, that this had been his manner of life, especially towards the members of the Corinthian church. He had examined his heart, and his ways, during his intercourse with them—the doctrine he had preached—the temper he had displayed—the conduct he had maintained; and though, doubtless, he who confessed himself to be "less than the least of all saints," could not fail to be sensible of imperfections, and short-comings, and sins, yet of this he was conscious, that he had not sought "theirs, but them"—that his heart had been animated by the single desire of doing them good—that, throughout his whole proceedings as their spiritual instructor, he had been guided by disinterested views—that, in every part of his behavior towards them, he had abundantly manifested a self-denying spirit—and that he could meet every suspicion, and every asseveration, of an opposite description, with an appeal to Him who saw into his heart, and who knew that he "lied not," when he declared his innocence of those unworthy sentiments which they so ungratefully and illiberally laid to his charge. And, being conscious of all this, "he rejoiced"—he bore their calumnies with a patient and undisturbed mind; and he was moreover glad, because, trusting in the merit of his Redeemer for acceptance, he could also, from "the testimony of his conscience," look up to God, through Christ, for his approbation, and forward to heaven for a reward of those services to the Corinthian church, which divine grace had enabled him to render, and in regard to which his motives were suspected, and his character traduced.

And it is well for ministers of the truth, I now observe, *secondly*, to bear these facts in remembrance.

While we, my friends, are exerting ourselves for the welfare of our fellow-men—whether it be for their spiritual instruction, or for their temporal comfort,—it is not unlikely that we may experience the same unthank-

fulness on the part of those whose interests we are promoting, which the apostle experienced—that we may have our views and feelings misrepresented—that our most benevolent and useful actions may be ascribed to vanity, ostentation, thirst for applause, or some other species of self-seeking—and that such may be the treatment given us by the very persons to whose advantage we have been most liberal and unwearied in contributing. All this I need not say, must be extremely galling and disheartening—not only painful to our feelings, but apt to make us grow weary in well-doing. And, that we may be comforted under this trial, it is essential that, like the apostle, we have "the testimony of a good conscience." If the insincerity, or worldly-mindedness, or impure motives, in which it has been whispered or declared that our conduct has originated, have indeed had a place in our minds, then every spring of consolation is dried up; and to what we suffer from the reproaches of those whom we have been befriending, there is added the bitter reflection, that in truth, we deserve all that we suffer. To guard against this, nothing will avail us, but that in every thing we be conscious of acting with "simplicity and godly sincerity; not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God." And, conscious of this, though we cannot be wholly insensible to the base and wicked returns made to us by the objects of our bounty, we need not and we shall not, be immoderately cast down. We have been doing good "as unto the Lord, and not unto men," and therefore we cannot lose our reward. We have "the witness in ourselves," that, whatever failings and faults may cleave to us, in this case we have been walking uprightly before God, as the disciples of Jesus Christ. He approves; and that is an infinite recompense for all the censures that may be heaped upon us by uncandid observers or malicious and ungrateful slanderers. He will give us support and encouragement in our labors of love, from which neither ingratitude, nor obloquy, should ever induce us to desist. It may even please him to

vindicate our character, and "bring out our righteousness as the noon day," At all events, we have Him for our friend, while we have but men for our foes; and assuredly he will in the end, he will for ever, put an end to the detractions which have accompanied our doings upon earth, by pronouncing upon us the sentence, and exalting us to the place, of "good and faithful servants" in heaven. And in the "testimony of our conscience," telling us such truths, connected with such views, and pointing to such an issue, we cannot fail, to whatever extent we may be visited with the evils which afflicted the apostle, like him, to have joy and rejoicing.

But though the text must be thus applied in a peculiar sense to Paul and to all who are similarly circumstanced, we now observe, *thirdly*, that it may also be applied to the general character and experience of every Christian. The fact holds, not merely as to the trial here especially referred to, but to the whole range of Christian duty. When our conscience testifies, that, in any thing whatever, we have done well, in that we are permitted, and entitled, and called upon to rejoice. This is not only agreeable to the laws which govern our moral nature, and by which a connexion is established between conscious rectitude and conscious satisfaction, but it is in strict accordance with experimental christianity: it arises from the relation in which our good works stand to our spiritual safety; and it is recognised in the statements and examples of holy writ. We must never indeed forget, even for a moment, the principle with which we introduced this discourse, that in regard to our title to eternal life, we have no ground of rejoicing but the righteousness and sacrifice of Jesus Christ, received and relied upon in the exercise of humble, implicit, undivided faith. But in conjunction with this principle, we ought also to remember, that whatever constitutes a part of salvation, or tends to satisfy us that salvation is ours, must proportionally and necessarily give us joy. Now personal holiness is one of the benefits which Christ has secured for his people: we cannot

therefore have that holiness without rejoicing i
Great and delightful is the privilege of being guide
influenced by divine grace; can we then be cons
of walking in the ways of righteousness, without r
ing in that which is a practical proof that the gra
God has been given to us, and not given in vain?
Bible tells us that we are "justified by faith," an
"faith without works is dead;" if the works,
which demonstrate the reality of our faith, and c
quently of our justification, abound in our practice
we refuse to rejoice in them, and in the conclusi
which they point? Finally, as holiness enters
tially into our meetness for heaven—the great and
mate object of our hopes and expectations—we c
fail to rejoice in every testimony to our holiness,
with that testimony is connected the conviction th
are in possession of the first fruits of that eternal
which God has promised to bestow, on all who se
by "a patient continuance in well-doing."

Now, my friends, you see in the whole of this
ment, nothing that should impress you in any me
or respect, with the idea of your having any thing
torious whereof to boast, or that should have the
effect in drawing away your trust and your affec
from Christ. On the contrary, whatever is m
good in you, is represented as derived, not from
independent energies, but from divine aid, and from
alone; and all the rejoicing in it which you are
ranted to feel, is to be traced exclusively to the fin
work of "the Lord your righteousness, and
strength." Considering the virtues which you pra
as a part of salvation, or as an effect of grace, or
evidence of faith, or as a qualification for heaven, st
every case, they are traced to the operation and
of the great Mediator. Viewed in these lights, a
these relations—the only lights and relations in v
they ought to be viewed—they leave you "unprofi
servants," miserable sinners, and by affording you
faction merely as pointing to Christ, as centering in

as deriving all their value from him, as nothing whatever, excepting in so far as they may be traced to him, they direct your regards to him as the foundation of all your hope, as the bestower of all your peace, as the source of all your joy. And to this conclusion we must come, not in spite of, but in conformity to, all that has been said, respecting the consolation and the gladness that spring from "the testimony of a good conscience," that "you must rejoice in the Lord Jesus Christ, and have no confidence in the flesh."

But, that you may have the rejoicing which the apostle experienced, that it may be a rejoicing on sufficient grounds and a rejoicing which no man can take from you, you must attend to these few particulars:

First, While your rejoicing arises from the testimony of your conscience, you must be careful that your conscience be well informed. We know that the apostle's conscience was of this description; for he had been taught by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, and taught miraculously, not only that he himself might be an eminent believer, but that he might be an accredited teacher of others in all things pertaining to the doctrines of the gospel, and the duties of the Christian life. But, though the extent of your knowledge may not be equal to his, still it is necessary for you to have knowledge, as far as it can be attained. Labor, therefore, to acquire correct and extensive and connected views of divine truth, by perusing what he and the other inspired writers have been moved by the Holy Ghost to indite, for the edification of the church; meditate upon what you thus read, with seriousness and diligence; and pray for illumination from above, to accompany the instruction which you derive from the written word. In this way, your conscience being fully enlightened, and duly alive as to all that God requires you to do and be, it will give neither a mistaken, nor a hurtful testimony: on the contrary, it will lead you to cultivate that deportment which accords with the spirit and the precepts of the gospel; and while it permits you to rejoice, it will afford you

a pledge that your rejoicing is warranted, by the testimony of Him who is "greater than your conscience, and who knoweth all things."

Secondly, Be anxious to have all your motives pure. You may be distinguished by many outward virtues, which are agreeable to the letter of the divine law, and which will secure for you the approbation and applause of those who witness them, and especially of those who are profited by them. And yet, I need not tell you, that, if they proceed not from right principles, they are destitute of all real value; they neither are an evidence of your interest in the Redeemer, nor can they have any effect in qualifying you for heaven; to rejoice in them therefore, would be to rejoice in worthlessness and vanity. Your great concern must be to have your hearts purified from the love of sin, and imbued with the love of holiness—to have established within you those truths, and those views, which God has sanctioned as alone worthy to regulate the conduct of his people—and on every occasion to give to them their full operation, in preserving you from sin, and in stimulating you to duty. This will secure the conduct, which, whatever appearance it may wear in the eyes of men, or whatever bearing it may have on the interests of those who are affected by it, is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ—which your own conscience will approve—and which will authorize you to comply with the invocation of the Psalmist, "Rejoice in the Lord, and be glad ye righteous; and shout for joy all ye that are upright in heart."

Thirdly, See that your character be consistent and uniform. It is not an insulated deed of virtue or of charity, which will afford ground for "the rejoicing testimony of a good conscience." The deed of virtue which stands by itself, is not, in truth, a Christian virtue at all. An action, to be truly virtuous, must stand associated with virtue of every description; and whatever legitimately gives birth to a rejoicing conscience, must form a constituent part of that aggregate of excel-

lence, all of which proceeds from a divine source, and all of which is necessary to lead to a heavenly consummation. If your conscience dictate one holy action, be assured it will dictate every other; and it will not approve of one, if the rest be wanting, nor will it give any sanction to the joy you may feel on account of that one. It is requisite that this be the testimony of your conscience, not that you have been righteous, and benevolent, and sincere, in one or two instances, but that you have been so in the general course and tenor of your deportment; that you have had your "conversation in the world" accommodated throughout to the law of God, and pervaded by the spirit of true religion. Surrender yourselves, therefore, wholly to the service of the Redeemer; withhold nothing which he exacts; indulge in nothing which he prohibits; let it be your great concern to please him in all your ways; and thus, "exercising yourselves to have always a conscience void of offence both towards God and towards man," you will be possessed of an inward "testimony," with which will be abundantly connected the "rejoicing," in which the apostle so freely and exultingly indulged.

Finally, Never forget that all this must proceed from "the grace of God." To this the apostle refers in the text; and we can never be too often reminded, that "of ourselves we can do nothing," nothing truly good or acceptable. Unless, therefore, you have direction and assistance from on high, your best attainments will be meagre, and your best efforts fruitless. Let me exhort you, then, to distrust yourselves, and to look to Christ, as both your "righteousness and your strength." Study to do all things in his name, and in his might. Cast yourselves upon his management, that he may "guide you by his counsel;" upon his righteousness, that you may find favor with God; upon his grace and spirit, that he may "sanctify you wholly." And, if thus He be to you "wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," then are ye "complete in Him," and your "rejoicing" shall be full, and rapturous, and everlasting.

SERMON VI.*

THE CHRISTIAN'S CHOICE.

JOSHUA, XXIV. 15.

"*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve.*"

"SEEM evil unto you to serve the Lord!" How can the service of the Lord seem evil to any one who is not either wholly void of understanding, or altogether hardened against religious impressions? Were I to put the question to you, my friends, if you deem it "evil to serve the Lord," is there one of you, old or young, who would not instantly and decidedly answer in the negative? And were I again to ask you, if you did not think it good rather to serve the Lord, would not you all reply, as with one voice, in the affirmative, and acknowledge that to do so must be your duty, your honor, and your happiness? Well, then, are you prepared to say, with a good conscience, that you are in fact serving the Lord?

By some of you, I doubt not, an answer to this inquiry also may be returned; for of some of you, I doubt not, it may be truly affirmed, that, redeemed by

* Preached for the Edinburgh and Leith Seaman's Friend Society in St. George's Church, Edinburgh, on the evening of Sabbath, the 11th April, 1830.

livine mercy, and with that price which the Son of God paid for your ransom—released from those bonds by which you were naturally held in slavery, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, you are now devoted to the Lord, doing his will upon earth, and looking for the recompense which he has promised to his servants in heaven.

But I fear there are others of you of whom so much cannot be truly affirmed. You may, indeed, be flattering yourselves that you are the servants of God. You may be offended if we deny that this is your character. And you may point to many things which you regularly and habitually do, in proof that we are mistaken. You are not avowed unbelievers, but sober and uniform professors of Christianity. You abstain from all the more flagrant of those offences which the divine law forbids; and you perform all the more important of those duties which the divine law enjoins. You come punctually to the house of prayer, and engage, with every appearance of devotion, in the various exercises of the sanctuary. You are kind and faithful to your friends. You are just and honorable in your dealings with the world. And there are many to bear witness to your deeds of sympathy and beneficence.

Now all this may be, so far, a correct view of your deportment. Still more virtues might have been included in the catalogue. Your character may shine with still greater brilliancy, and be possessed of still greater respectability and worth. And yet all that it exhibits does not amount to any satisfactory evidence that you are "serving the Lord." On the contrary, it is quite compatible with your serving Mammon—with your "serving divers lusts and pleasures"—with your serving "the creature" in many of those various forms which it assumes and wears as the object of attachment. Remember, my friends, that the service of God is exclusive. It does not admit of interference, or of competition, or of divided homage. It deserves—it demands—and it must have—the whole man. If it be accom-

panied with a deliberate or habitual withholding of the time, the talent, the affection, the activity—any of the offerings which God claims for himself as the great Supreme, it is deprived of its characteristic principle, and may as well be denominated the service of any other master. He is Lord over all; he is entitled to your unqualified and unreserved submission; whatever you do, it must be done in conformity to his will, and in subservience to his glory; this is a right which eternally inheres in him, and which it is impossible for him to alienate; and, therefore, when you indulge in any thing which implies a disregard of God's sovereignty, and disobedience to God's commandments, and violation of God's honor, you are guilty of that which is inconsistent with the devotedness of heart and life, which must ever distinguish those by whom he is truly served. It is of no consequence how many things you do, which are literally and formally prescribed by his authority, if yet there be other things with respect to which his authority is either not recognised or directly contradicted. For, in that case, his dominion over you is, with your own consent, encroached upon by objects to which you owe no allegiance, and to which you cannot pay it, without refusing to Him what is due upon a ground which it is not for the most exalted intelligences that surround his throne to occupy—a ground which it is not competent even for the universe to share with him—a ground which he alone possesses as the all-powerful and all-perfect Being who made you, to whom you owe all that you are, and all that you possess, and all that you can do.

And this holds true even where your conduct does not involve a plain and manifest transgression of any part of the decalogue. To convict you of being unfaithful to God's service, it is not necessary that you be chargeable with some specific crime, or with some course of immorality. Something much less heinous in its nature, and much less striking in its aspect, will answer the purpose. From the spirit and

r in which you engage in the pursuits of lawful
ss—from the sort of amusements and recreations
:h you betake yourselves, the time that you waste
hem, the expense at which you indulge in them
ı the liking which you cherish, and the attention
you practically give, to any thing whatsoever
:ted with the world or things created—from these
be seen, that the ascendency over you is pos-
, not by God alone, but by something else, with
he neither can, nor will, share his governing pre-
e; and that, consequently, the service which,
ır points, you may imagine you are rendering to
: a service only in name and in fancy—a service
:h the works of his own hands, or the gifts of his
ıunty, or even the enemies to his own sway, are
on a level with himself—a service, therefore, of
he does not approve, and which he will never
l. His requisition to each one of you is, "Give
r heart." He requires your heart—your whole
—your heart with all its principles, and disposi-
ınd sensibilities. And if your heart be thus sur-
ed to him, the conduct, which is but a demon-
n of its influence and actings, will exhibit, in all
ıartments, and in all its bearings, a single regard
will and glory; so that you will addict yourselves
:hing which is at acknowledged variance with
and even your most innocent pursuits will be in
viency or in subordination to them. And they
vith the eye of holy observation, watch you as
e occupied in the various employments, and as
ıss through the various scenes and vicissitudes of
ill perceive, that, wherever you are, and what-
ou do, all your works constitute and are referable
service—that you "serve the Lord, and that you
ıo other gods but him." But, should there be
rticular course of action, however inconsiderable
be deemed, and however harmless it may be in
:cts upon others, in which you are chargeable
ırgetting God, or with opposing him, that affords

proof unquestionable, that He is not reigning in and over your heart—that there prevails, and is cherished, a hostile authority at the very seat and source of all acceptable homage—that the seeming excellencies by which you are distinguished are nothing better than tributes which you pay to public opinion, or to selfish ambition, or to outward necessity—and that, with all the profession, and all the appearance, of serving the Lord, it is the melancholy and undeniable fact, that other masters have been allowed to usurp his place, and are holding their unrighteous dominion over you.

Nay, but moreover, think my friends, what it is to serve the Lord, as believers in the gospel of his Son. Without this belief, which you profess to cherish, not only is there no salvation for you hereafter, but there can be no such thing here, as your serving the Lord acceptably. You are placed under the dispensation of the gospel. You are not entitled to contemplate God, except in the light in which he has been pleased to reveal himself. And all the regards that you offer to him, must be in compliance with the principles which he has laid down, and the claims which he has preferred, as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The service which you render, must be the service you owe him as a redeeming God. It must imply a fulfilment of those obligations under which, in that capacity, he has laid you. And it must stand in a just relation to that future recompense which he has taught you to expect from "Him whom he has appointed to judge the world in righteousness."

Now, if you have been redeemed; if you have been taken from under the curse of the law, rescued from the bondage of corruption, delivered out of the hands of your spiritual enemies, brought into a state of peace and reconciliation with God, and made heirs of his heavenly kingdom; and if this be your faith, your feeling, and your experience, think you that there is aught in the wide universe that can rightly interfere between you and Him who has thus saved you, or to which you can

ield even the smallest portion of that obeisance, all of hich, though it were infinitely greater than it ever can e, he has so graciously, and so dearly, purchased? What has the devil, or the world, or the flesh done for our emancipation from sin and wretchedness? Have ot they wrought—are not they working perpetually, or your continuance in that miserable state into which he fall has brought you? Is it not one of God's purposes—one of the benefits of that freedom which the Saviour has accomplished in your behalf, to destroy heir tyrannical and pernicious domination over your ouls? And how then can you listen to their suggesions, or be guided by their influence, without despising he deliverance which must be unspeakably precious to you, or not precious at all; without refusing to pay that debt of gratitude which you have contracted to him, from whose unmerited and rich mercy it has all proceeded; and without virtually declaring your preference of that degrading and destructive servitude out of which he has brought you, to the spiritual liberty, and the celestial hopes, into the possession of which he has introduced you by the sacrifice of his beloved Son? If the redemption with which God visited the Israelites, when he "brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage," furnished Joshua with a powerful and conclusive argument for their entering into a covenant to "serve the Lord only, and to serve him fully;" how potent, how persuasive, how overpowering, must the argument be, to constrain you to consecrate yourselves to his service, when you consider the redemption which he has accomplished in your behalf, and of which he makes you the abundant, though undeserving partakers—a redemption embracing the welfare of your never-dying souls, and commensurate with the duration of eternity? You are "not your own"—you are God's—"you are bought with a price," and therefore bound by the most sacred and endearing ties, to "glorify him in your bodies and in your spirits which are his." And being thus the property of God—being

his by the right of purchase—a purchase dictated by ineffable love, made at a costly rate, and issuing in glorious and permanent results to you who are the subjects of it, what room is there left for the demands of any created being on your reverence or submission, apart from his or contrary to it? And how can you be his servants, while there is a single feeling of your heart, or a single action of your life, willingly devoted to any other claimant on your obedience, whose wishes or whose exactions he has not seen meet to sanction?

Now, my friends, apply this test to yourselves. It is no doubt a strict and searching one. But it is scriptural and true. Apply it to yourselves, and say if it does not ascertain, beyond all controversy, that there are those of you, and not a few, who do not "serve the Lord." In his external service, both as it respects the positive institutions of religion, and the more prominent offices of morality, you may engage with great frequency and with seeming zeal. But, alas! not to speak of those habits of thought and sentiment which our vision cannot reach, and of those manifold occupations which you hide from us with the veil of secrecy and retirement, do not we see you every day giving yourselves to practices and to gratifications, which indicate any thing but the fear or the love of God, and which, if you will only make the attempt to reconcile them with his service, you will find to be not merely discordant with it, but utterly hostile to it, both in spirit and in letter. Those recreations and gaieties are sometimes dearest to you, which most unfit you for the duties of his Sabbath and his sanctuary, which banish from your mind most easily all serious concern about your present relation and your final responsibility to him, and which draw most largely on the resources with which he has supplied you as stewards of his bounty, for ministering to the relief of the poor, and the instruction of the ignorant. Sometimes, in the details of your lawful calling, you act upon maxims which stand opposed to the declarations and dictates of his word, and prosecute your secular plans with an

agerness which shows that you are looking no higher han temporal prosperity for your motive to industry; hat in your labors to accumulate wealth, or to provide or yourselves the meat and the gold that perisheth, you re careless about that blessing of his which alone "maketh truly rich;" and that you are willing to live as if he had given you nothing in trust, and had never said to you, "Occupy till I come." And sometimes, from the mode in which you perform what is even right in itself and commanded by God, we cannot help concluding that you are doing it, not "unto the Lord, but unto men,"—not willingly or cheerfully, but with a reluctant, grudging, discontented mind—not from the constraining influence of those considerations which the gospel intimates and urges, and which are sanctified by their uniform reference to God, but with the sole view of advancing your secular interests, or of recommending yourselves to the favor and the patronage of your fellow-sinners. And do not suppose that the evil to which I allude is to be found only in such of you as manifest a glaring example, or a very offensive degree, of that contrariety which subsists between those parts of your character that have the aspect of serving the Lord, and those other parts of it that neutralize these mistaken or hypocritical pretensions. It will be discovered in the case of every one of you, the tenor of whose life is not governed by the paramount authority of "thus saith the Lord;" who does not in small as well as in great things, study a scrupulous conformity to the divine will; who obeys, when he does obey, God, in that cold and perfunctory manner, which denotes the absence of all cordiality, all cheerfulness, all delight in "running the way of his commandments;" who, in his inmost heart and least open transactions, does not set himself to be faithful and devoted, equally as in his external demeanor, and in his most undisguised and notorious deeds; who has it not as the object of his fervent desire and his constant endeavor, to yield an unqualified, unresisting, undivided, free, and full subjection to the sway of Him,

whose he is by creating goodness, preserving mercy, redeeming grace, and who has laid him under obligations of gratitude and obedience, which the mixed and imperfect dutifulness of his mortal pilgrimage can but barely acknowledge, and which all the sinless and lofty services of immortality will never be able to exhaust.

To all such I would now address the exhortation of the text; an exhortation justly applicable to them, and meriting their deepest and most anxious attention.

1. In the first place, choose you whom you will serve, —the Lord, or those idols which an evil heart of unbelief has substituted in His place.

From what we have just now said, it may be concluded that you have already and actually made your choice. And doubtless, in one sense, this is true. Whatever you may think, there is in each of you a fixedness of character, resulting from the determinations of your own minds, which may be discovered by those who look at it in the light of divine truth, and "judge righteous judgment;" which, at any rate, is clear and unambiguous to the eye of the heart-searching and omniscient God; and which will most certainly decide your destiny on that day which shall forever separate "between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve the Lord and those who serve him not."

You may allege, that it does not "seem evil to you to serve the Lord." And, speculatively, as we have already remarked, this may be true; but, really and practically, it is false. You think, you feel, you act, as if it did "seem evil unto you to serve the Lord." There is a latent repugnance in your minds to his service. There is an embodied hostility or indifference to it, in your every-day doings. There is a real devotedness to those whom you ought not to serve, which is essentially and irreconcileably inconsistent with a real devotedness to Him whom you ought to serve. Two masters, so opposite as the one is to the other in this case, you cannot possibly serve; and, from the claims and the character of the true God, and from the claims and the

haracter of those false gods which men's wicked pas-ions have created for themselves, it is evident, that, if ou serve them, you cannot serve Him. And the idea hat you are submitting to His sway, when you are, in act, their slaves, merely because you reject the atro-ious saying, that it is "evil to serve the Lord," and re not disinclined to do many things included in that ervice, is all a delusion, which, however long it may ast in this land of self-deception and shadows, must nevitably be broken when God "brings every secret hought into judgment, and gives to every man accord-ng to his works."

Now, it is our wish that this delusion, so sad and so atal, under which you labor, should be broken before he day of retribution comes. We are anxious that your eyes should now be opened to see the folly and the danger in which you are involved—that your hearts should now be undeceived, as to the real position in which you stand—that your purposes should now be directed towards that object, on which alone they can be rightly and safely fixed—that your feet should now be turned away from the path of error and of ruin, and guided into "the narrow way that leadeth unto life." You have been "halting between two opinions;" we are desirous that you should embrace one of them, and that you should abide by it. You have been trying to amalgamate two systems: we are desirous that you should abandon the one, and cleave to the other. You have been taxing your ingenuity to serve two masters: we are desirous that you should confine your labors, and your attachments, and your duties, to one of these, and that you should forsake the other without lingering and without reserve. We are desirous that you should adopt this decided mode of proceeding, because it alone is wise and safe. And imagine not, that, when we exhort you to make your choice, we mean to insinuate, that, on whatever side of the question your choice may fall, it will be well for you, either in time or in eternity. In exhorting you to make your choice, we proceed on

the conviction, and the certainty, that the one alternative is life, and that the other alternative is death—that either heaven or hell must be the result of the option which you are called to exercise. But we give the exhortation, that your attention may be directed to the fallacy of your conduct, and to the perils of your condition; that you may no longer attempt to compromise what no power in heaven or on earth can ever make to agree; that you may be led to look steadily and impartially at all the merits of the case, as to which you have been hitherto most dangerously indifferent and remiss; that you may compare the course you have been pursuing, with what the word of God has told you of your spiritual and moral obligations; that you may find out the necessary and immeasurable difference, between "serving the Lord," and living as you have been accustomed to do; and that, setting the one over against the other, you may behold, in the contrast which is presented to your view, what should effectually constrain you to cease from the unlawful service in which you have hitherto employed your faculties, and attach yourselves exclusively and devotedly to that holy and godlike service, from which it stands at a vast and unapproachable distance, both in the sight of God, and in the destiny of man.

"Choose, then, whom ye will serve." If folly be permitted to direct you—if dishonor have any charms in your regard—if insensibility to infinite goodness, or defiance of almighty power, be esteemed by you a virtue—and if you wish that everlasting destruction should be your end,—then choose to serve sin—to serve Satan—to serve the world—to serve whatsoever would tempt you to ungodly actions, or to criminal indulgence; for, most assuredly, of this service it may be truly said, that its labors are debasement—its joys, madness—its wages, eternal death. No, my friends, you cannot, you will not, choose such a service as this. "Choose, then, whom ye will serve,"—and "choose the Lord." His service is the highest glory of your nature—the most

perfect liberty of rational and moral beings—the surest and most fertile source of inward comfort and outward prosperity. It is sweetened by the saving mercy, and animated by the gracious help of Him who prescribes it, and to whom it is rendered. It is the work of the Divine Spirit, operating on the subjects of his regenerating power and his sanctifying agency. It is the fruit of that offering of Himself, by which Jesus Christ expiated our guilt, and thus "purged our consciences from dead works, that we should serve the living God." It exalts those who are enabled to perform it, to an alliance with the ministering angels on high, and links them to the throne of the Eternal. And, whatever may be the toils, and the trials, and the sorrows, with which it is connected, or of which it is productive upon earth, it has the divine promise of present support and consolation suited to all such exigencies, and of a reward in the heavenly world, whose richness no tongue can utter, and no imagination conceive.

"Choose the Lord" then as the King, the Master, the Saviour "whom you will serve." Make a covenant with him in your hearts, that no other shall receive your homage. Look into his word, and have recourse to it as the directory which is to guide you in all your endeavors to please and to honor him. Let your minds dwell habitually on the tenderness with which he has pitied, and redeemed, and called you. Resist every allurement which would make you either remiss or unfaithful, in the work he has given you to perform. Pray to him for the pardon of those offences and short-comings which accompany your best and purest acts of submission to his authority, and for that strength which he alone can impart for "upholding your goings in his ways, that your footsteps slide not." Study fidelity to him in the least, as well as in the greatest, of the duties which he requires from you—in the most sequestered, as well as in the most public, of those scenes in which he appoints you to labor for his cause. Let every movement you make in obedience to his command, or

in promotion of his honor, be animated by the spirit of love, invigorated by the exercise of faith, and enlivened by a sense of his kindness, who enjoins and who requires it. And be ever looking forward to the recompense which awaits you in the kingdom of the just, that you may be cheered amidst all your difficulties and discouragements, and stimulated to still greater activity, and trained to still greater patience, in doing and in suffering all his holy will concerning you.

But some of you, perhaps, though satisfied of the wisdom of the exhortation, and of the necessity of following it, are unwilling to make your choice immediately, and would rather continue a little longer that mixed and compromising service in which God and Mammon have been equally the objects of your regard.

2. To all such I would, secondly, address the exhortation, "Choose ye, *this day*, whom ye will serve."

Having acknowledged that you have been in error,—gross, grievous, and perilous error,—why should you delay forsaking it? Is not this to belie your own professed convictions? Is it not deliberately to prefer the wrong to the right—the hazardous to the safe—the miserable to the happy? Is it not to bargain with God—for the exhortation, though addressed to you through the medium of his servants, proceeds from Himself—is it not to bargain with God, as it were, to permit you to remain somewhat longer out of his household, and to indulge yourselves somewhat longer in that which offends and dishonors Him? And the compensation you offer is that having obtained this concession from the great and holy Being, from whom, after all, it is impossible you can really hope to obtain it, you will then return to Him from whom you should never have departed, and yield to Him that obedience which you should never have withheld. O how can you justify or excuse yourselves for making such a proposal, or attempting such a species of procrastination. It is adding sin to sin—folly to folly—peril to peril.

"Choose you this day whom you will serve;" and instead of hesitating, as if you might still snatch another pleasure before you renounce your connexion with the world, account "the time past, as far more than sufficient to have wrought the will of the flesh." Wonder at the forbearance of God in not making you long since a monument of his righteous anger against the unholy and impenitent. And let your experience of his sparing mercy awaken in you such shame, such grief, such repentings for having so obstinately kept away from him, and so ungratefully requited him, as that you will feel it to be unpardonable guilt to delay for another moment casting yourselves into the arms of his compassion, and going to "work in his vineyard."

"Choose you this day whom you will serve;" because the sooner that you enter on God's service, in its full import, the sooner will you consult the dignity of that rational nature which he has given you, and which you have been hitherto degrading, by keeping it in the bondage of moral corruption; the more will you consult the obligations which you owe to him as your benefactor, and your Saviour—obligations which no circumstances can ever weaken or annul; and the more will you consult your comfort and well-being, as inhabitants of the scene which you now occupy, and in which the fear of the Lord, and the keeping of his commandments are as contributive to the happiness of a present life, as they are essential to your preparation for a future and a better.

"Choose you this day whom you will serve;" because to delay the change which a right choice implies, will be the means of rendering it more difficult in the end. The habits which at present control you in your purposes of reformation, and indispose you for the execution of them, will grow gradually stronger as you advance in your wayward career. And the same deceitful arguments—the same delusive influences which are now prevailing over your convictions, will occur with

more insinuating address, and operate with more formidable power, at every future period of your course.

"Choose you this day whom you will serve;" for if you do not embrace the existing opportunity of devoting yourselves wholly and heartily to God, which is your reasonable and bounden service, another opportunity may never be afforded. Many things may happen to prevent you from carrying your resolution into effect, even supposing, what is extremely doubtful, that your resolution is sincere, and ample, and decided. Engrossing worldly cares, agonizing disease, helpless debility, mental alienation, may put an interdict on your best designs, and exclude you from any farther participation, even in that imperfect and defective service, in which you have been so long and so vainly confiding. And death itself may come upon you at an unexpected moment, and suddenly remove you to that dread reckoning, which will make no account of the purposes that you formed, and delayed to fulfil; which will rather pronounce it to be an aggravation of your guilt and of your doom, that you knew what was good, and continued to do what was evil—that you determined to serve God, and yet continued to serve his enemies till you should be pleased to exchange their service for his, and that thus you treasured up for yourselves, amidst the obvious warnings of his providence, and amidst the confessed workings of his grace, a larger measure of that righteous indignation, which he has threatened to pour out on all those who "will not have him to rule over them," or who "serve the creature more than the Creator."

O be wise, then; and "choose this day," this very day, whom you will serve. Give yourselves to God—give yourselves to God wholly—give yourselves to God now, and give yourselves to God forever.

To such of you as have already made your choice, and have chosen "the good part," I would now address myself. And perhaps you may think, that I have been neglecting you, and occupying myself too exclusively

with those of a different and opposite character. But if you will give scope to your Christian feelings, my apology for acting thus will be obvious and sufficient. Let there be but "one sheep" that has gone astray, and is wandering at a distance from the good Shepherd, and on the eve of perishing, have I not great authority for leaving the "ninety and nine" and going forth to seek for that solitary wanderer, if haply I may find him, and bring him back in safety to the fold which he had left, that there may be joy on earth, and that there may be joy in heaven. And alas! may it not be presumed, even with the utmost stretch of that "charity which hopeth all things and believeth all things," that, instead of one only, there are many in this large assembly, to whom the service of God is still a strange or a distasteful work, and who in affection and in practice have joined themselves to idols, and are in bondage to the world and to sin? And surely, my Christian friends, you cannot grudge any efforts that may be made by the ministers of the gospel, to awaken such from their spiritual slumbers, to rouse them to an alarming sense of their condition, to reclaim them from the paths of guilt and ruin, and to bring them to that Saviour who bled for their souls, who weeps for their infatuation, who has commissioned us to beseech them to be reconciled, and who calls upon them from his throne on high to repent, and believe, and live. You know the misery of that state in which they are now living, for you have lived in it yourselves. You know the safety, and the comfort, and the happiness of being redeemed from it, and becoming the servants of him who paid the ransom; for you possess and feel, what you would not exchange for a thousand worlds. And it is a first lesson of the grace that has brought you this salvation, a first fruit of that delightful experience, which is so precious to you, that your compassions go forth upon them who are still far from God, and far from righteousness; that you supplicate the Father of mercies in their behalf, that you withhold no aid and

refuse no exertion, which may be blessed as an instrument for emancipating and saving them. Instead, therefore, of murmuring that I have done what I could, to persuade them to choose the service of God, to the utter and eternal abandonment of all other services, I trust that your secret, but fervent prayers have gone along with every argument I have urged, with every expostulation I have used, with every threatening I have held out, with every invitation I have given, to prevail upon the apostate sinners who are beside you, and among you, and around you, to hasten away from all that has been hitherto ensnaring their hearts, or binding them over to the debasing drudgeries, and the unreal joys, of a moral despotism, to come into that liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free, and to consecrate their all to the will and to the glory of a Master who, as he has given himself for their ransom, will impart to them his Spirit for their help, and confer upon them immortality for their reward.

And I trust that your sympathies will accompany me, as I bid you take a wider range, and not cease from your prayers and your exertions, while there is a human being within your reach whose heart rests upon the creature, and whose return you may encourage to the worship and service of the great Creator. Alas! what multitudes are there upon the face of the earth who are daily "bowing the knee to Baal,"—who are doing homage at the shrine of Mammon—who are "led captive by Satan at his will"—who are eager and industrious, in doing whatsoever their unholy passions bid them, and who either know not God at all, or only render him that obedience which can be spared from the obedience of the "other lords" who have acquired the mastery over them. Here is a field of spiritual benevolence on which you may expatiate with ceaseless interest, and toil with ceaseless activity; and it is your duty, as the servants of Christ, to cultivate it according to your talents and your means and your opportunities, that you may not be wanting in what you owe at once

to your merciful Redeemer, and to your perishing brethren.

I call your attention this evening to a class of men—your fellow-subjects, your neighbors,—whose situation demands your kindness and your care; and I plead with you in behalf of an Institution which is laboring affectionately, diligently, and successfully for their highest and most enduring interests. The Edinburgh and Leith Seaman's Friend Society must be already well known to you, for it has existed for many years: it has carried on its meritorious work at your very door, and under your very eye: it has frequently appealed to you for support, and has received it; and no one has pretended to doubt that its efforts have been both wise and vigorous, and that it has been honored, under the blessing of Heaven, to confer signal benefits on that interesting part of the population whom it has taken under its guardianship, and visited with its mercy. It cares for their temporal comfort, and it cares for their eternal salvation. Its main object is to wean them from the service of sin, and to engage them in the service of God. And while for this purpose, it studies to separate them from the temptations to profusion and intemperance and idleness, to which they might otherwise be too much exposed, and by which they might otherwise be too easily overcome, it strikes at the very root of all the mischiefs that beset their lot and surround their path, by a moral machinery which provides them with saving knowledge, which goes to penetrate their hearts, and to imbue them with the principles and spirit of the gospel, and which teaches, and encourages, and stimulates them to seek for their happiness in the favor of God, in the exercises of piety, in the practice of holiness, in the hope of heaven and immortality. I could dilate with pleasure on its various means of elevating their character, and improving their condition—means which were wont to be thought of with indifference, or treated as the subjects of wonder, of merriment, or of

idle pity. I could tell you of the tracts which it circulates—of the Bibles which it distributes—of the education which it imparts—of the ordinances which it administers—of the visits of Christian love which it pays—of the numberless offices of kindness by which it enlightens, and comforts, and animates the objects of its constant solicitude. But I need not occupy your time in such discussions. You are already acquainted with the character and merits of this establishment. Its directors deserve every degree of confidence you can repose in them. Its funds need to be replenished by the bounty of a generous and Christian public. Its prosperity will, in some good measure, depend upon the supply which it this evening receives from the audience that I now address. It throws itself upon your charity. And I am sure you will not willingly mar its usefulness, or disappoint its expectations, by withholding what the providence of that God whom you and it are united in serving, has enabled you to bestow. O think of the seaman, embarked upon the dangerous deep—exposed to the furious tempest, or to the unwholesome climate, or to the thousand perils which surround him in his adventurous course. If, by the protection of Him who rules over all, he escape these multiplied hazards, and come back in safety to his native shore and his beloved home, what a blessing for him to find, that, while he himself has gone and returned in the faith of that Saviour in whom he has been taught to believe, and in a dependance upon that Almighty arm on which his once godless soul has been taught to lean for guidance and protection, his wife and his little ones have been learning the same lessons, and practising the same virtues, and enjoying the same peace. And if he be fated never more to revisit that domestic circle which he left in sorrow and in hope, and with all the yearnings which are known only to the heart of a seaman-husband and a seaman-father; if it be the will of that God whom he loves and serves, that he should be the victim of a fatal

shipwreck—the vessel his coffin, and the ocean his grave—O what a precious consolation to him to recollect, as he sinks in the remorseless waters, that he does not leave his widow disconsolate, nor his orphans unprotected—that they are in the hands of Christians, who love their souls, and will not abandon them to ignorance, oppression, or destitution—and that he is going to that blessed and peaceful region, for whose mansions they also are training, and amidst whose blessedness they and he shall meet again, and dwell, and rejoice forever!

SERMON VII.*

CHRISTIAN BENEFICENCE.

MATTHEW xxv. 35, last clause.

"*I was a stranger and ye took me in.*"

THERE is a certain class of people who not only build their hopes of salvation upon their own personal righteousness, but who even restrict that righteousness, as the foundation of their hopes, to acts of benevolence. And when we remonstrate with them on the presumptuousness, and the danger, of such an idea, they quote, in support of it, the passage of which my text forms a part, and ask triumphantly whether it be not a clear and irrefragable proof, that, if we abound in deeds of kindness to the poor, the afflicted, and the oppressed, we shall have boldness in the day of judgment.

Now, to those by whom such a sentiment is, in any degree, maintained, I would address a few remarks, tending to show that it is altogether without countenance or sanction from the word of God.

In scripture, it is by no means uncommon to annex the attainment of future happiness to the exercise of a particular grace. Of this fact I could give you a mul-

* Preached in St. George's Church, Edinburgh, 18th December, 1822, when a collection was made in behalf of the Spanish and Italian Refugees, at the request of the Lord Provost and Magistrates.

titude of examples, were it necessary. But if the opinion I am supposing you to entertain be correct, as to almsgiving, it must be equally correct as to all the other graces of Christianity, which are placed in a similar connexion. Why fix upon this, and neglect the others, since they and it have the same common authority? For what good reason should not any one of these be the ground of expectation and assurance, as well as that which you have particularly selected for the purpose? If you are to obtain a sentence of acquittal, in consequence of being beneficent to the needy and the wretched, why may not a sentence of acquittal, result as well and as certainly from your godliness, or your humility, or your justice, or your patience, or your purity, or any other single feature of the Christian character?

The truth is, that the scriptural statement, when correctly apprehended, is perfectly consistent with itself, and is founded in the very nature and reason of the thing. It does not mean, that, if you have any particular virtue, and no other, you shall be admitted into heaven; for, truly, the possession of but one insulated virtue will appear to us impossible, if our ideas of holiness be taken from the gospel. According to the gospel scheme of morality, every genuine virtue must be the fruit of a regenerated heart, and must be practised under the influence of right principles and motives. But if the heart be indeed regenerated, and if the conduct be indeed governed by right principles and motives, then there will be a cordial disposition, and a habitual endeavor, to obey the will of God in every thing. And, on this account, whenever a particular virtue has the promise of eternal happiness attached to it, we are to regard it as co-existing with all its kindred virtues, though they be not specifically stated, and as, in fact, the representative of the whole character, though it be not mentioned as holding that station. If, therefore, any one build his prospects of future blessedness on his alms-deeds, we say to him, in strict conformity to his own general principle, "It is true you abound in

alms-deeds, but if you are sincere in this duty, as enjoined by God's will, you cannot fail to be diligent in the discharge of all other duties. A pure fountain cannot send out a transparent stream on one side, and a polluted stream on the other. If the heart be changed, and sanctified, and swayed by a holy influence, this influence will work its proper effects in every department of the life. And, we ask you, are you spiritually minded—are you clothed with humility—are you just in your dealings—are you patient under trials and provocations—are you devoted to God? If you are not characterised by these things, as well as by that, of which you boast so much, and in which you trust so securely, then you can no more look for heaven, than the man who strictly observes the eighth commandment, but disregards every other part of the decalogue."

Even all the moral virtues together, will not answer the purpose for which so many seem to think almsgiving exclusively sufficient; for, if condemnation and acquittal are severally allied to the possession and to the want of these, the very same thing may be said of faith. Of faith, scripture speaks thus: "He that believeth on the Son of God is not condemned; but he that believeth not, is condemned already." Christ, we are told, will come at the last day, to be "glorified in his saints, and admired of all them that believe." And then his people shall "receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls." Now, why may not we assume for faith, that very place, to which some advance the practice of the moralities and charities of life, as to its effect upon our future destiny? There is just as much scriptural warrant for putting the one, as there is for putting the other, into that connexion. And, were we to adopt the same line of argument in both cases, it would be at least as idle to censure those who rest their hopes for judgment upon "faith without works," as it would be to censure those who depend upon "works without faith." That such notions should be held and acted upon by either, is a proof that they

ave not considered the scripture doctrine on this subect, or that they have not understood it.

The great and distinguishing character of the gospel s, that it is a message of grace to sinful and ruined nan—a method of redemption, devised for creatures who cannot redeem themselves—a plan of restoration, for the benefit of those who, by transgressing the law of God, have incurred its penalty, and who have no ability in themselves either to atone for what is past, or rightly and acceptably to obey for the future. To supply these radical defects in our spiritual condition, a Saviour is revealed who is mighty to deliver us. And how do we become interested in the benefit resulting from his interposition? Not, surely, by works; for the insufficiency of our own doings to obtain justification before God, is the very reason why a divine Saviour is necessary, and why a divine Saviour is sent. But, according to the express language of the Bible, it is "by faith." Christ is "set forth as a propitiation for our sins, through faith in his blood." He is "the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed in his name." "God so loved the world, that he sent his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but might have everlasting life." Faith, then, is the only medium through which the Saviour and the blessings of his salvation can become ours.

But, if it be asked, whether, consistently with this statement, our good deeds be essential to our appearing before God in judgment, we answer, certainly they are. For, though we are not under the law as a covenant of works, we are still under it as a rule of conduct. And obedience to it is still requisite, not merely in submission to the Supreme will, but as a test and evidence of our faith in the Redeemer, and as a qualification for the happiness of heaven. And we are to be judged "according to our works," because this accords most

with the nature of a general judgment—the practical effects of dispositions and feelings being more tangible and obvious, than the dispositions and feelings themselves; and because, if the general course of our life has been evil, this will show not only that we have sinned, but that we have also perversely refused to repent, and to accept of a Saviour; while, on the other hand, if the general course of our life has been good, it will show that our rebellion has been succeeded by penitence and faith; and, moreover, because our deeds being good or evil, will demonstrate our fitness for that place of happiness, or of misery, into which the sentence of our Judge shall send us, and exhibit the fullest proof, which assembled myriads can require, that all his awards, of suffering, and of blessedness, are the dictates of infinite mercy and unimpeachable justice.

Nor is it difficult to perceive why charity has been selected, as that branch of moral excellence upon which the Judge will ostensibly found his final decree. Charity is the fruit of love to God, and is "shed abroad in the heart by the power of the Holy Ghost." It is of the operation of true faith, and gives the most satisfying evidence of its reality and its power. "It is the bond of perfectness and the fulfilling of the law." Such being its high importance in the code of Christian morality, we cannot wonder at the distinguished honor that is to be put upon it in the day of judgment. And, besides, while justice, in all its forms, may be easily defined, and can be enforced by the authority and sanction of human laws, charity is of such a nature as not to be amenable to human jurisdiction; it must be left, in its variety of exercise and extent, to the discretion of the individuals by whom it is practised; and, consequently, wherever it truly and abundantly resides, it testifies, better than any other virtue can do, the existence, the strength, and the dominion, of those great Christian principles, from which alone it can emanate, and by which alone it can be supported.

With the same ease we can account for singling out those particular expressions of charity which are here specified. We have already observed, that when any virtue is brought forward as terminating in everlasting life, it must be understood to be practised in its genuine nature, and full latitude; and whenever it is so practised, it is of course accompanied by every other virtue. And, this being the case, any one virtue will substantially answer the purpose as well as another. But as, for the reasons we have assigned, there is a peculiar propriety in fixing upon the grace of charity, in general, so there appears to be a peculiar propriety also in fixing upon those instances of it, in particular, which are here adduced; because the occasions of them are of every day's and every hour's occurrence; they have nothing of the splendid or the magnificent to recommend them; they are the minute offices of kindness to the destitute and the distressed which do not make a figure in the eye of the world, but are continually called for; they are demanded by the feelings of common humanity, as well as by the sentiments of Christian compassion; and he who neglects them has, beyond all controversy, no pretension to moral excellence, while he who performs them with the tenderness, the activity, the diligence, the minuteness, which are here so pathetically described, affords a demonstration that he has the faith of the gospel, for "it worketh by love," and thus "loving his brethren whom he hath seen," we conclude, and are satisfied, that he also "loveth God whom he hath not seen;" and therefore is meet for the services, and the enjoyments of that better state in which his Judge shall assign him his everlasting portion.

It may, perhaps, be stated as an additional reason for our Saviour's choosing these modes of charity, as his example, that they are precisely such as the exigencies of his followers would peculiarly require. Of them, and of their circumstances, he never failed to think with the kindliest interest, and the warmest affection. He was aware of the hardships and persecutions to which

they were to be subjected, after his departure. He knew that hunger, and nakedness, and imprisonment, and sickness, were to be the evils of their lot, in consequence of their labors in his cause. Amidst such distresses as these, they would stand in the utmost need of sympathy and assistance. And the exercise of such sympathy, and the communication of such assistance, would be duties of imperative obligation upon all who are capable of feeling the one, or of rendering the other. So that, having these thoughts fully in his view, and strongly impressed upon his mind, it is neither an improbable supposition, nor a refined speculation, that he allowed them to mingle in the account he was giving of the final judgment, and to influence, in one important particular, his delineation of that eventful scene. But though he may have had the treatment of his suffering disciples more immediately in his eye, yet the principle is of universal application, and embraces charitable conduct, in whatever circumstances it may be required, and by whomsoever it may be maintained.

Let me now say a few words on the importance and necessity of the charity which is here spoken of.

A great deal of emphasis is laid upon it throughout the whole of Scripture. We cannot read almost a page of the sacred volume, without finding it inculcated in some form or other. And, indeed, so thoroughly imbued with it is the whole system of our faith, that every one, who breathes the spirit of Christianity, breathes also the spirit of charity. The doctrines of the gospel constrain us—its precepts teach us—its examples encourage us—its promises animate us—to practise it. And, that nothing may be wanting to make us cherish it, as a constituent a prominent, a conspicuous, part of our character, our Saviour brings it forward in his description of the last day, as the great and decisive test of our meetness for the kingdom of heaven. If we have it, we shall receive a sentence of acquittal, and be admitted into the joys and the glories of immortality. If we be destitute of it, we shall receive a sentence of condemnation, and

be consigned to the regions of misery and despair. Think, my friends, of the extent of your demerit, if you go before the tribunal of God without it, that you may see how indispensably requisite it is to your safety and welfare. This demerit does not consist merely in your having shut your heart, and your hand, against the cry of the needy. That, of itself, would be sufficient to place you on the left hand of your Judge, because it would have been the violation of an explicit commandment of the law of God. But it arises from the total absence of Christian principle and Christian sentiment, and the general and abiding depravity of mind, which indifference to the wants and the wretchedness of our poor brethren invariably indicates. From what we have already said, and from what you know, of the maxims and declarations of scripture, think you, that while harboring such indifference, you can possibly have that "faith" in the Redeemer by which sinners are justified and saved?—that there dwelleth in you the love of God, whom you are bound to "love with all your heart"—that you are under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit, whose "fruit is in all goodness," and whose sanctifying grace is necessary to prepare you for heaven? Think you, that any of the other excellencies of the Christian life adorn you, since they all spring from the same source, and are all held together by the same bond of union? Think you, that you can have been "renewed in the spirit of your mind," when you have not "put on bowels of mercies," and are still nourishing the hard-heartedness, and walking in the selfish ways, of the natural man? Think you, that you have any thing about you of the temper and character of your divine Master, whose example is left for your imitation, and of whom it is truly said that "he went about doing good?" Think you, that you are qualified for associating with "the spirits of the just made perfect," and for uniting with them in the pursuits and the enjoyments of that happy place, where "charity never faileth?" And think you, that you are fit for appearing before Christ

in judgment, when you have cherished this hard and unfeeling temper, in spite not only of his grace leading him, "though he was rich, to become poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich," but in defiance of the solemn warning which he gives, that, with regard to this very thing, he will call you to a strict and particular reckoning at the last day, and that he will reward or punish you, according as you are found to have observed or neglected the great duty of charity to the poor and the afflicted.

Ah, my friends, it is no ordinary guilt that will attach to you, if you have been wanting in this respect. Just observe what an interest the Saviour takes in it. He identifies himself with his suffering and indigent followers; and the good and evil which are done to them, he will regard and recompense as done to himself. "Inasmuch as ye did it to the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me." "Inasmuch as ye did it not to these my brethren, ye did it not unto me." I mention this, not to show the infinite condescension of Christ, (though such condescension may well shame the proud despisers of the poor, by demonstrating, how unlike they are to the Master whom they profess to serve,) but to point out the aggravations of such misconduct, the guilt of those who commit it, arising not merely from their treatment of the poor, but from their treatment of Him, who is the Saviour of the rich and the poor together; for the doctrine of this passage plainly is, that if you withhold your hand from giving to them who are in need, and from relieving them who are in distress, every pang you inflict by your neglect, or by your cruelty, even upon the lowest of your fellow-creatures, you virtually inflict upon the Redeemer and the Judge of the world: he feels it as a personal injury—it amounts to a practical rejection of him, and he will mark it as such, when he reckons with you at the last, and pronounces your final doom.

But perhaps, while thus enforcing charity, I shall be told, that want of charity is not characteristic of the times or of the place, in which we live, and that exhortations to

almsgiving are, at the very least, superfluous. I acknowledge, with unfeigned pleasure, the liberality which prevails among all classes of the people; and I am confident, that in your contributions this day, we shall have an additional proof of it, at once substantial and gratifying. But among the most humane, there will always be found some to mingle, in whose breasts and conduct it is too much a stranger, and who need to be roused to a sense even of this duty, the most obvious, perhaps, of all the duties incumbent on the followers of Christ. The very circumstance of charity being so prevalent is not unlikely to be employed as a pretext for disregarding the claims of the needy, by those who give, without any distinct conception, or any lively feeling, of their obligations to cultivate that grace. And besides, the most established and experienced Christians need to be reminded from time to time of the grounds and motives of a duty, to violate which there are so many temptations in the natural selfishness of the human heart, in the incessant tendency that we all feel to pursue our own interests, and to seek our own gratifications, without regard to the interests and gratifications of others; in those party jealousies and religious prejudices which too frequently arrest the current of beneficence; and sometimes in the failings, and vices, and ingratitude of the individuals who have been the largest participators of our bounty.

But there is something more important still to be stated. I am speaking, not merely for the sake of such as need your help, but for your own sake, and with a view to the improvement of your personal character, and to your fitness to appear at the bar of God. And for this purpose, let me remind you that it is not enough that you give, however liberally, to your necessitous brethren. By all means do this, for without it, you can have no just pretensions to charity at all. But remember, that you have to do with God, much more than you have to do with man. Man receives your bounty, and he is benefited and relieved by it, whether you have

bestowed it from worthy or unworthy considerations. But God sees the heart, and will accept of no service which does not proceed from that source, and which is not regulated by those views and principles which he himself has prescribed. And, we insist on this the more, because we are referring to the account you are hereafter to render. Important, indeed, and indispensable is the virtue of almsgiving; but important and indispensable though it be, that will not secure for it the divine approbation, nor render it a qualification for the heavenly state, in whatever form and spirit you may choose to exercise it. In the day of judgment, indeed, our sentence will be founded on the character of our works, as good or bad, and particularly upon that branch of moral conduct which is here specified. But then, it will be upon our works as connected with our inward views and dispositions. As every secret deed will be brought to light, and form a part of the account we have to render, so will every secret thought be made manifest—every principle upon which we proceeded—every motive by which we were actuated—every feeling and view which had any share in the government of our life and conversation. And upon these, much more than upon the external aspect, or literal meaning, or natural effects of our actions themselves, the fate of every one of us will then depend; so that if our kindness to the poor has originated in nothing better than a desire to relieve our own feelings, by getting rid of their importunity, or in a thirst for a good reputation among our fellow-men, or in the vain project of bartering our money for the kingdom of heaven, as if benevolence were the price of immortality, or in any other mistaken or corrupt sentiment whatsoever—upon what principle, I would ask, either of reason or of scripture, can we expect to be pronounced "the blessed of the Lord," and to be invited to "the inheritance of a kingdom prepared for us from the foundation of the world?" The hope of the formalist, of the hypocrite, of the unsanctified almsgiver, may accompany him through life, and

go down with him to the grave, but when he appears before the omniscient God, who searches the heart, and judges righteous judgment, it perishes forever. Let us be careful, then, that we have the spirit, as well as the practise of charity—that we give with a willing mind as well as with a courteous hand—that every benevolent deed we perform be the fruit of a lively faith, and thus contribute its part to that holy character which God requires us to maintain, and which will fit us for judgment and eternity.

I have still to add, that the charity to which so much importance is attached, and which is held to be so absolutely requisite, with a view to future judgment, is distinguished by its unwearied activity, and the constant and minute adaptation of its cares to the various necessities of those whom it endeavors to relieve. It is not enough to cherish compassionate feelings—to utter the language of sensibility and tenderness when we speak of the children of suffering and of sorrow—to address to them the common-places of sympathy, and say, "be ye warmed and be ye filled." We must communicate to them according to their need, and study to be substantially useful. It is not enough, that we bestow money upon those who need our aid, and who ask it, or that we confine ourselves to one species of benevolence, when it is in our power to indulge in many. We must "do good as we have opportunity;" we must "give alms of such things as we have;" and when we are obliged to say to the poor supplicant "silver and gold have I none," we must be ready to add, "but such as I have, give I unto thee." It is not enough that we minister of our substance to the destitute. We must not withhold our personal exertions, nor grudge our time, when these are necessary for carrying on the labor of love: We must "search out the cause that we know not;" and "go about doing good." Nor is it enough, that we be kind and helpful to those of our own kindred, or of our own sect, or of our own neighborhood. We must listen to the cry of nature, and to the admonition of the gos-

pel, in behalf of all who stand in need of our beneficence; extending it to the stranger who is cast upon our care, from whatever country he may come, and whatever form of worship he may have embraced, and even to those who, yielding to temptations from which we have been providentially delivered, have become the victims of their own folly, and are thereby involved in misfortune and penury; for God "has made of one blood all the nations that dwell upon the face of the earth," and he "causeth his sun to shine upon the evil and the good, and his rain to descend upon the just and the unjust." All these things are comprehended in the language which the Judge will hold to the righteous, and should determine us to be active, and disinterested, and generous, and unwearied, in promoting the relief of our poor afflicted brethren. "I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger, and ye took me in."

"The Lord," says the Psalmist, "preserveth the stranger." This has been his memorial in all generations. The stranger has ever been the object of his peculiar care, watched over by his providence,—protected by his law, privileged by his mercy, recommended and committed to the hospitality of his people. Under the Mosaic economy, strangers had particular immunities granted to them. The Jews were enjoined, by special commandments, to show them kindness. Divine indignation was denounced against such as should treat them with cruelty or subject them to oppression. And, divine appeals were repeatedly made, to the sympathies of those among whom they dwelt, reminding them of the hardships and severities which they themselves had experienced in a foreign land.

This minute guardianship of the stranger was the more necessary among the Jews, because they were chosen and separated from the rest of mankind; the arrangements of that polity under which they were placed, were unavoidably of an exclusive character; and the natural tendency of the whole system was to

render them reserved, and jealous, and illiberal, towards all who did not belong to their commonwealth. God, in his wisdom and in his mercy, did much to counteract this spirit, by the declarations and the provisions to which I have alluded. But he did not neglect the safety and the comfort of the stranger, nor leave him without a token of his compassionate concern, even after the free and generous dispensation of the gospel was introduced. "The middle wall of partition being broken down" between Jew and Gentile—men of every kindred being invited to the faith of Christ and the hope of immortality—and those that accept of the invitation being taught to look on the whole family of mankind with the eye of benevolence and of kindliness, there was less occasion for any authoritative enactments, or any explicit precepts, in order to preserve the stranger from injury and contempt, and to secure for him what the helplessness of his circumstances might require. Yet, even thus favorably situated, we find him selected and marked out as an object of Christian regard. Not only does he share in those common sympathies, which we are taught to feel towards all our fellow-men, and practically to manifest, by an adaptation of our treatment to their various necessities; but he is particularly specified, and pressed on our benevolent attentions, lest he should be overlooked amidst the multiplicity of those claims which are addressed to our charity, or despised as an intermeddler with those bounties to which our kinsmen, our fellow-citizens, and our compatriots have the first and strongest title. In the beautiful and affecting parable of the man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, we are instructed to consider every man as "our neighbor" however strange he may be to us as to his country or his creed, and however obnoxious to those resentments which ancient rivalships and recent provocations may have engendered in our minds. The precept given by an inspired apostle is, that we "be not forgetful to entertain strangers:" in which the combined influence of

affectionate exhortation and strict commandment is employed to banish the suspicions and aversions with which we might otherwise look on these candidates for our pity and our aid—to make us think more of the ties by which a common nature and a common fate have bound them to us, than of the local distance and adventitious differences which have heretofore separated them from us—and to persuade us to receive them with such cordial feeling, and to treat them with such disinterested kindness, as that, though we cannot charm them with the blessings and enjoyments of the home which they have left, we may yet help them in their destitution, and cheer them in their sadness. And then our blessed Saviour assumes to himself the character of a stranger—enters into all his loneliness, and anxieties and griefs—gives him an identity of interests and of feelings with his own—declares that he will at last recompense the good, and avenge the evil, done to him, as if they were done to himself—and thus invests him, as it were, with the sacredness of his own person, and fences him round with the awful and affecting solemnities of eternal judgment. "I was *a stranger*, and ye took me in.—Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me."—"I was a stranger, and ye took me not in.—Inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me." "And the wicked shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal."

Need I say more, my friends, to bespeak your compassion in behalf of the stranger, when all the pleadings of common humanity for him, are thus enforced upon your hearts by the instructions, the authority, and the example of your God and Redeemer? No; instead of requiring farther argument or entreaty, you will only wait, or seek, for cases in which you may practically indulge the compassion you have learnt to feel. And one of the most affecting and most urgent of these cases we this day bring before you. The Spanish and Italian refugees are a class of strangers for whom we can

confidently solicit your bounty. They have already excited public sympathy, and received public aid. And although, by the efforts of our benevolent countrymen in the South, their wants have been greatly relieved, and their sufferings greatly alleviated, yet their number is still so large, and their situation still so distressful, and their prospects still so gloomy and discouraging, that, knowing but a half of what they are doomed to endure, you cannot, be your affections ever so cold, and your habits ever so parsimonious, withhold from them your commiseration and your alms.

Think of them merely as poor strangers. There is something melancholy and touching in the condition of a stranger, even when he is not reduced in his worldly circumstances, and in no danger of suffering neglect from those among whom he sojourns. But more melancholy and touching by far is his condition, when he is visited with the thousand ills of poverty. Poverty by itself is pitiable; but how aggravated are its pains, and how intolerable its burden, when it falls to the lot of the stranger—when the two calamities are united in dismal fellowship—when the individual who would have been made sorrowful by either, is overwhelmed by both! Would not you pity such a man?—Pity, then, the refugees, whose cause I now plead, for they are poor strangers.

But think of them also as strangers, whose poverty is the deeper, and the more cruel, in consideration of the state from which they have fallen. They were not previously accustomed to hardship or to indigence, which would have made their privations less keenly felt, and more easily borne. Sad and mournful is the contrast between what they were and what they are, which rises up to their recollection, and presses itself on their experience. They were men of rank—men of opulence—men of authority—men of education and accomplishment—whose cup was full, whose mountain stood strong, who were not prepared for the bitterness of adversity, and never dreamed of coming ruin. And

now, they have none of the comforts—they have scarcely the necessaries of life; they have not even a roof to shelter them, nor garments to clothe them, nor bread to eat, except what is procured by the small pittance which they earn with the sweat of their brow, or the smaller pittance still which they receive from the hand of charity, that they, and their wives, and their little ones may not perish for want. And when you thus contemplate their fate—and when you look at it, and see it in the light of their former prosperity,—is it possible that your souls should not be softened and melted into pity, and that, out of your abundance, you should not give liberally for the relief of their pressing wants, and for the healing of their broken hearts?

Think again of the causes which have sent them among you, in all the humiliation and misery of poor fallen strangers. They were driven from their own country. There was neither comfort nor safety for them there. The iron hand of despotism oppressed them. The terrors of persecution were arrayed against them. The suspicions of the tyrant and the priest fell upon them. And to escape the degradation, the imprisonment, or the death that awaited them, they became exiles from the land that gave them birth, and from the scenes with which their earliest thoughts and tenderest feelings were associated, and fled for protection to a foreign shore. And need I say, that in proportion as you detest the spirit which cannot brook one sigh for freedom, one expression of liberal opinion, one effort to raise man above the level of a slave, by imparting to him the benefits of useful knowledge; and which is ever breathing out cruelty and slaughter against the objects of its hate, because they are the best friends, and the most zealous promoters, of the civilization and the happiness of our race; in proportion as you detest that intolerant and desolating spirit, will you compassionate the poor fallen strangers whose cause I advocate; for they are the victims whom it has sacrificed to its despotic and superstitious lusts, and they are made

wretched and cast upon your benevolence, because it is rampant, sanguinary, and remorseless in its hostility to the cause of liberty and truth.

And think, once more, of the testimony which these forlorn outcasts, these destitute strangers, have given to the character of our country, by throwing themselves so confidently into the arms of its protection. They had long been accustomed to admire its independence, its valor, its generosity, its moral as well as its political greatness; perhaps in the secret musings of their hearts on that deliverance to which they aspired, and on the doubtful issue of that struggle in which they might one day engage, they turned their eye to it as the favorer of the free, and the refuge of the oppressed: and when the hour of trial, and discomfiture, and disappointment came, and in their own beloved homes—for home is dear even under a tyrant's sway—they could find no shelter from the storm of persecution, and no rest even for the sole of their foot, they came to us at once in the fulness of their sorrows, and in the fulness of their confidence, and doubted not to find their hopes realized in the sufficiency of our guardianship, in the warmth of our sympathy, and in the outgoings of our benevolence. And is it for a moment to be supposed, that you will frustrate, or mock, the expectations which they have so fondly cherished; that you will discourage or crush the sentiments of reverence and affection with which they have regarded our nation; that in the apathy with which you behold, or in the niggardliness with which you relieve their urgent necessities, you will send them away with the impression, that our fame is greater than our merit, and that, though you have bread enough and to spare, you grudge even a morsel to those who have come from afar, and are hungry and distressed, because they too fondly loved the distinction in which you so proudly rejoice? This cannot be supposed: you will not be indifferent to their case; you will not be stinted in your almsgiving; you will not merely do as much, or give as much, as may save you from the charge of

cruelty; but having your charity kindled into a more ardent flame, by the attestation which these poor strangers have given to the character of your country, and by the dependence which they have so freely, and so nobly, placed upon its virtue and its magnanimity, you will abound in the labor of love to which you are now called; and give "as you have received of the Lord."

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers," says an apostle, "for thereby some have entertained angels unawares." Expect not such an event literally—but you may expect the blessing which it implies. That expression of charity to which you are now invited will be useful in many respects, on which, however, your time will not allow me to expatiate as I could wish.

By engaging in it, you will assist in improving, liberalizing, and exalting the national character—because you give exercise to that spirit of vital religion, of enlightened philanthropy, and of generous freedom, in which its deeds of highest and purest worth originate, and in which its only true and permanent greatness consists.

You also help to secure for your country the countenance and favor of Him on whom the stability of its fortunes, and the growth of its prosperity, must ever depend; for as he reveals himself to be the Preserver of the stranger, he must smile, with approbation, and surround, with a mighty and a gracious arm, that people who honor him by their acts of beneficence and tenderness to that class of his destitute offspring on whom he has bestowed so signal an evidence of his regard.

And you will also add to the reputation and influence of your country—a reputation, grounded, not on achievements of ambitious and bloody heroism, but on deeds which render man the brother, and the friend, of man, and which adorn communities as well as individuals, with solid and imperishable honors—influence, which resting in the gratitude of those who have experienced,

and in the admiration of those who have witnessed, what is done for the stranger and the exile, will be successfully employed in the spirit of that mighty and enlarged benevolence which secured it, for advancing the interests of freedom, and civilization, and Christianity throughout the world.

Finally, you will forward the improvement of your own character, and augment the happiness of your own destiny. Commiseration and kindness to strangers are essential parts of your Christian vocation. And, a better opportunity of practising these virtues you can scarcely hope to enjoy. Never omit an opportunity of doing good. The duty is laid upon you—perform it. The privilege is at your door—gladly embrace, and liberally use it. You may not know the heart of a destitute stranger in temporal things—but if you know it in spiritual things, the motive will be still more powerful and constraining. If you know what it is to have been once "an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, and a stranger to the covenant of promise," but to be now "a fellow-citizen with the saints, and of the household of God," you will have a heart to feel, with tenderest sympathy, for the strangers who now solicit your support; and you will be conscious of an irresistible impulse to do, for the bodies and the outward comfort of these poor aliens and exiles, what He has so mercifully done for your souls. And when you put your hand into that store out of which you are to draw the supply that you intend for the oppressed, persecuted, destitute refugees, let your faith look forward to Christ as seated on the throne of judgment, and listen to him, as saying to the righteous, "I was a stranger and ye took me in. Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it unto me. Enter ye into the joy of your Lord."

SERMON VIII.

THE IMPERFECTIONS OF CHRISTIANS EXAGGERATED BY THE ENEMIES OF CHRISTIANITY.

1 TIMOTHY vi. 1.

"*Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.*"

It is objected to Christianity, which in my text may be considered as meant by "the name and doctrine of God," that many of those who profess to be regulated by its spirit and laws, instead of being better, are often much worse, than other men; that pretending to adhere to it as a system of truth and righteousness, they yet frequently neglect or violate the duties of those relations and conditions in which they are placed; that servants, for example, as here particularly alluded to by the apostle, bearing the name of Jesus, do notwithstanding, act unfaithfully and disobediently; that the same remark is applicable to individuals of every other class and station in civil society; and that even some of the ministers of the gospel, who have studied it most, and should know it best, are themselves grievously addicted to the follies and vices of the world.

This objection, indeed, is seldom proposed in a formal way by the more honest and rational opponents of our religion; because they could hardly do so, and at the same time hope to preserve their reputation as philosophers, or as men of sense. But the objection is, nevertheless, substantially contained, and artfully urged, in those sneering attacks which they delight to make on the character of misguided zealots, and in that ill-dissembled eagerness and affected regret with which they proclaim the failings of the righteous. It is employed as a triumphant answer to all our arguments in favor of Christianity, by the ignorant, the thoughtless, and the profligate, who are either incapable of reasoning, or unwilling to reflect deeply on the subject, and who form a large proportion of the unbelieving class of mankind. And it will frequently obtrude itself on the notice, and distress the feelings, of well-intentioned Christians, when they see the unsanctified deportment of those who call themselves by the name of the Saviour, and from whom they are naturally led to expect the brightest examples of piety and virtue. On these accounts, it may be proper to consider the objection somewhat particularly, that we may be satisfied how much reason our adversaries have to be ashamed of it, and how very little reason we have to yield to its influence, or to be afraid of its effects on the issue of the great controversy in which we are engaged, as those who are "fighting the good fight of faith." In the present discourse, we shall confine our attention to a preliminary point, which is of considerable importance in its bearing on the question to be discussed. We maintain that the alleged fact, though too frequently realized, both in our own conduct, and in the conduct of other professing Christians, is far less prevalent and far less formidable than it is usually represented to be. And this we shall endeavor to illustrate in a variety of particulars.

1. In the first place, then, the persons by whom the objection is adduced, seem, in many cases, to be influenced by a determination to censure, with or without reason,

the conduct of Christ's professed followers. Whatever aspect we put on, and whatever deportment we maintain, they must discover, or imagine, something which they may use as a pretext for personal reproach, and which they may ultimately level against the doctrine or principles that we hold. If we are grave, they accuse us of being morose and gloomy. If we are cheerful, then we are light and joyous spirits, having as little seriousness and as much wantonness as themselves. If we reprove them for the impiety with which they insult our ears, they traduce us as rude and officious zealots, who are strangers to the courtesy, and foes to the intercourse, of social life. If we find it expedient to overlook the profaneness or indecency of which they have been guilty in our presence, they instantly construe our silence into an approval of their licentiousness, and set us down as willing associates in their iniquity. If we engage in the pursuits of industry with vigor, or assert with firmness any of our temporal rights which have been unjustly attacked, they say we are covetous, and worldly minded, and love gain rather than godliness. If we exhibit in these things, any degree of sanctification and self-denial, then it is all a pretence; we are driven by necessity, or influenced by ostentation; and to the baseness of an avaricious spirit, we have added the odious vice of hypocrisy. In this way, and in various other respects, they criticise and misinterpret our character; and every remark terminates, as might be expected, in a significant sneer at that religion, which above all others, was designed to make men virtuous and happy.

That we are actually, and in many instances, treated in this manner by unbelievers, it may not indeed be easy to prove by any deduction of particulars. But the fact must have come within the experience and observation of every person who has ever mixed with the enemies of the gospel. And truly this conduct of theirs is neither unnatural nor unprecedented. It is not unnatural, for it corresponds exactly with their ignorance of our peculiar views, and with that ungenerous wish to subvert our faith

from which it evidently proceeds, and which is seldom very scrupulous about the sacrifices that it will make to accomplish its object. And, it is not unprecedented, for it was long ago exemplified in the case of the Jews, who were pleased neither with the suitable austerity of the Baptist, nor with the condescension and familiarity of Jesus, and consequently entertained a prejudice against the gospel which proved fatal to themselves and to their country. "Whereunto," said Christ, "shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, and saying, we have piped unto you, and ye have not danced: we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, he hath a devil. The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, behold, a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

With such adversaries as these, there is no contending with success: we have no chance with them; for act as we please, let us be as holy and irreproachable as we may, they will so misconstrue what we say and do, as to convert good into evil, right into wrong, innocence into guilt; and then, upon an invention of their own with respect to our behavior, they found a reproach against the religion we profess. But even when they discover real faults in us, their mode of judging is still characterised by the same want of candor, for

2. We remark, in the second place, that the fact which gives rise to the objection we are considering, is not unfrequently exaggerated, by the fault of an individual being transferred and imputed to the whole class to which he belongs. If any Christian, especially one who is distinguished by religious zeal, or who holds a sacred office, yield to temptation, and act an unworthy part, the eye of our enemies is quick to discover, and their tongue eager to proclaim it. And, were they to confine their censure to the real offender, allowing that censure to be as severe as he deserves, though we could not, perhaps, admire its charity, we might not dis-

pute its justice. But it generally happens, that they regard the maxims neither of charity nor of justice on such occasions. While they are merciless in the strictures which they direct against the individual, they wantonly confound the innocent with the guilty; and by a sweeping indictment, charge his fault upon the whole of his Christian brethren. Upon his personal delinquency, they found a libel against men who never perhaps heard of his name; and who, while they might charitably lament, would yet scorn to patronise, his errors. "This is the way," they confidently assert, "this is the way in which Christians act: this is the way in which the ministers of the gospel conduct themselves: this is a specimen of the influence which that religion has upon its votaries." In these broad and universal terms, they make the fault of a single member, characteristic of the whole community to which he belongs; as if the responsibility of every man were not, in fairness and in truth, exclusively limited to his own conduct; or as if the invisible church of Christ would authorize any one to be its moral representative.

This, it must be allowed, is not a very accurate or candid mode of judging; but it is extremely prevalent, with respect to the various professions of ordinary life, as well as to the profession of Christianity. And though it can never be commended, since it is intrinsically wrong, yet it might be overlooked in the latter case as it often is in the former, were it not in this instance carried to a most dangerous length, and employed as a means of disparaging the gospel, and ruining immortal souls. The ultimate aim is to bring Christianity into disrepute —to "blaspheme the name and the doctrine of God;" and in order to accomplish what is thus intended, the aberrations of every individual Christian are spoken of, as descriptive of all who have embraced the religion of Jesus, and as a sort of universal and necessary accompaniment to the faith and character of his disciples.

3. It may be observed in the third place, that the fact of which we are speaking is often exaggerated, by con-

sidering one part of the Christian's conduct as a test of his whole character. No man, indeed, can be regarded as truly good, who wilfully and habitually violates any one of the precepts which he believes to issue from divine authority. I speak here, however, not of habitual, but of detached and occasional, transgressions of the divine law, which, it cannot be denied, have been, and daily are, committed by Christians of the very highest attainments. Now, these being inconsistent with the strong profession of the Christian; appearing more enormous, because they attach to one who has been in the practice of reproving others; and being, perhaps, independently of these aggravating circumstances, abundantly flagrant and injurious in themselves, they strike the feelings and the imagination forcibly, and are allowed so to fill up the view, that the virtues and graces with which they are associated, are forgotten or disregarded. It is not considered that the best of men cannot be perfect, and that, from the corruption of their nature, and the strength of external temptation, they will be sometimes betrayed into criminal indulgence. It is not considered by what bitter regret and self-abasement, such indulgence is succeeded, and what watchfulness, and mortification, and holy jealousy, it produces in their future life. It is not considered, how carefully they have avoided a thousand vices into which multitudes around them are plunging every day; how faithfully they have studied to discharge their personal and social duties; and how many have profited by their benevolence, their instructions and their example. All this is as much forgotten as if it had no existence; or it is recollected only for the purpose of heightening the color of their guilt. The splendor of their virtues is obscured by an individual spot, which malice or misconception has magnified far beyond its real size. And their character is appreciated, not by the tone of their principles, in connexion with the habitual tenor of their conduct, but by a single vicious action, of which their mind is utterly abhorrent, which they bewail with unfeigned sorrow, and which a candid

eye would trace to those imperfections of the heart, and those infelicities of condition, which adhere to humanity in its best estate.

It is in this manner that many of the enemies of religion decide, upon the merits of its sincerest votaries, and, through that false medium, upon its own pretensions to belief and submission. They look at the bad, rather than the good, qualities of the Christian; and speak as if one of the former overbalanced the brightest assemblage of the latter, and deprived them of all their claims on our approbation. Talk to these men of any individual, who is a Christian in his practice, as well as in his profession; tell them of his piety, his humility, his patience, his integrity, his charity; point him out as one who is a credit to religion, and an ornament to society; and they will instantly revert to some unholy action which, in an evil hour, he had once committed, or to some circumstances of his character which have a suspicious appearance; they dwell upon these with relentless severity, and conclude that he who is guilty of such things, whatever he may be in other respects, cannot be regarded as a person of real worth. Look into their writings, and you will perceive the same want of candor and discrimination, when they treat of those religious characters which are delineated in scripture. The unmanly equivocation of Abraham, the aggravated crime of David, and the unhappy strife between Paul and Barnabas, are held out as the characteristical features of these eminent persons: that faith, and piety, and humility, and zeal for the glory of God and the best interests of mankind, by which they were severally distinguished, go for nothing in the estimate that is formed; and the solitary deeds of sin which they themselves never attempted to justify or to palliate, and which the Holy Spirit hath recorded for our instruction and warning, are employed to depreciate or to annihilate their real worth, and to reduce them to a level with those, who make no pretensions to the love and the practice of religion. Thus it often

happens that, contrary to the way in which our opponents judge in all other cases, contrary to the way in which they themselves would choose to be judged, contrary to the way in which reason or candor permits us to judge of any man, they make one unworthy action of the Christian descriptive of his whole character, and an index to point out to us, with unerring certainty, what he really and essentially is.

4. In the fourth place, the fact by which unbelievers are furnished with the objection we refer to, is frequently amplified by a too rigid comparison of the Christian's conduct with the religion in which he professes to believe. Christianity, they well know, prescribes a course of action the most pure and holy that can be imagined. It admits of no violation, however inconsiderable, of the duty which we owe to God, to our neighbor, or to ourselves. It dictates a habitual abhorrence of every thing that is sinful, and a habitual devoted affection for every thing that is good. It commands us to "purify ourselves, even as God himself is pure."

Such is the religion, to the truth of which we have declared our assent; such the religion, by which we profess to be regulated; such the religion which we recommend to the faith and obedience of others. Hence our opponents conclude, either wilfully or by mistake, that our conduct must be actually immaculate in its whole tenor, and in all its constituent parts. They do not inquire whether this state of moral perfection be the constant object of our desires and our endeavors; but whether we have actually attained to it. They look at us in the spotless mirror of the gospel: they find, of course, not only certain features, but the general aspect of our character, to be extremely defective; nay, its blemishes and deformities become more prominent, from that blaze of unshaded purity in which it is reflected; and, judging by this appearance, they pronounce us to be inconsistent, hypocritical and base.

Now, it would be fair enough to judge us by the standard to which we appeal, if they would take care at

the same time to apply it under the direction of those rules, which the very nature and circumstances of the case require to be observed in such an important trial. In that case we should have no right to complain; we should abide the result, whatever it might be. But we justly complain, that they disregard those rules, and expect from us what, according to the test by which they try us, it is absolutely impossible we should ever be able to exhibit. They forget that the morality of the gospel must be perfect, because it is prescribed by a perfect Being, and that, had it been otherwise, they would very soon have discovered it to be unworthy of its alleged author. They forget that moral imperfection is an attribute of our fallen nature, and must therefore mingle in all our attempts to comply with the divine will, and to imitate the divine character. They forget that this doctrine is not only acknowledged in the Christian system, but is the very occasion of that system being planned, and the very foundation on which it is built. They forget that the promises and blessings of the gospel are never said to be conferred on those, who are as holy as the divine law requires; but on those who, amidst the frailties, and the corruption, and the sin which often mark their path, are seeking for heaven through justification by the grace of God in Christ Jesus, through sanctification by his Holy Spirit, and through a patient continuance in well-doing. To all these things they pay no attention, although such considerations are essentially requisite for enabling them to form a "righteous judgment." They confine their view to an unqualified contrast between the moral precepts of the gospel, and the actual state of Christian character; and because the latter does not come up to the former, or approach very near to it, or in other words, because they are not gratified with the existence of that which they have no title to expect, they can find no Christians who are truly and sincerely good.

And they fall the more readily into this error, by thinking of their own attainments. They, too, have a

code of morals, by which they affect to be guided: but it is so very indulgent to all their favorite passions; it so uniformly consults their pleasure, their inclinations, and their temporal interests; it has so little of rigorous or authoritative injunction belonging to it; and it abounds so much in saving clauses, that to conform oneself to it strictly, is one of the easiest things in the world. Its standard, indeed, is so miserably low, that in the present state of criminal law and of social intercourse, it is easier for them, methinks, to rise above than to fall below it. And, because they are conscious of keeping up to this standard of behavior which they have prescribed to themselves, they have no allowance to make to the Christian for coming short of the standard which is prescribed to him by the word of God, and regard his deficiency as a proof that he is not what he pretends to be.

It may be observed also, that to the injurious effects of this mode of judging, the ministers of religion are more particularly exposed. They not only make the same general professions with ordinary Christians, but take a leading part in defending and propagating the gospel. They preach it in its native purity. They remonstrate with the unbelieving. They reprove the disobedient. They insist upon a faithful performance of duty, and forbid the least indulgence to sinful appetite. Hence their failings are more ostensible and striking. A kind of involuntary resentment against them is awakened in the minds of those whom they address. These are happy to find an excuse so specious for their own immoralities. The avowed enemies of religion seize this opportunity of urging their favorite topic of priestcraft and hypocrisy. And thus, because ministers are not exactly and altogether what they teach others to be, occasion is taken to question their sincerity, or to deny that they have a good conscience. It may be said, indeed, to such persons, "We are men of like passions with yourselves; we have the same corrupt nature; we live in the same wicked world; we

are assaulted by the same spiritual foes; we are exposed to the same powerful temptations. We cannot therefore set a perfect example of the pure and faultless morality of the gospel, which we are nevertheless bound to preach, by the most sacred obligations of fidelity to God, and of love to you." This reasoning is very obvious, and to a reflecting mind, irresistible. And yet how often does it happen, that by a rigorous comparison of the conduct which ministers recommend, with the conduct which they exhibit—a comparison which gives to their very best actions an unfavorable aspect, and converts their most inconsiderable faults into great and flagrant guilt—they are convicted of absolute worthlessness, or thrust down to a much lower degree in the scale of character, than they are fairly entitled to hold. And being thus judged according to a most fallacious appearance, they are doomed to suffer the evil of a most unrighteous judgment.

In our next discourse on this subject, we shall endeavor to show, that the misconduct of Christians, which our enemies are so eager to lay hold of and exaggerate, affords no argument against the truth and excellence of the gospel, and that, on this account, they have no reason for "blaspheming the name and the doctrine of God." In the mean time, we shall offer a few remarks in reference to what has been already said.

1. And in the first place, let it not be thought, that we mean to plead for any undue or unlawful indulgence to the disciples of Jesus. In that case we should, indeed, inflict a cruel blow on the interests of religion, and be surrendering the very cause we profess to vindicate. The gospel is altogether "a doctrine according to godliness" and purity: its very purpose, as well as its whole tendency, is to destroy the ascendancy of sin, and restore man to the holy image of his Maker; and to say that any of its votaries may innocently neglect any duty, or taste of one criminal gratification, would be equally untrue and pernicious. But our object has been to point out the unfairness of its adver-

saries, in giving false and exaggerated views of those errors, into which real Christians are betrayed, in spite of all their resolutions and vigilance and efforts, in order to remove one ground on which occasion is taken to "blaspheme the name and doctrine of God." After all, though there were to be no exaggeration in the case, every fault committed by any of Christ's followers, will be taken advantage of to speak evil of the gospel. But it is not just, either to the gospel or to the followers of Christ, that Christian conduct should be misapprehended or misrepresented, or judged of uncandidly. And our design has been to guard against these evils; not to apologize for the sins of believers, but to prevent them from being so magnified or so mistaken, as to answer an infidel purpose, to which they could not otherwise have been made subservient.

2. In the second place, let Christians beware of encouraging unbelieving and ungodly men, in this mode of misjudging and misrepresenting character. Many, through rashness, or resentment, or some other unjustifiable feeling, seem anxious not only to detect, but even to proclaim the faults of their brethren, and to set them forth in more than their real enormity or aggravations; and thus, without any bad intention, but as really and effectually as if they had such intention, they furnish those who wait and "watch for our halting" with an occasion to blaspheme. Now, let us carefully avoid this. It is wrong in itself; it is uncharitable and cruel to those who are the more immediate objects of it; and it is wantonly increasing those prejudices against the gospel which are already too numerous and too strong, and fortifying its enemies in their unbelief and hostility. At the same time, we must beware of carrying this tenderness too far. Excessive anxiety to conceal the misconduct of our Christian brethren, labored attempts to palliate their guilt, unwillingness to condemn them for what is clearly and undeniably wrong, and such a treatment of them as they would have received from us had they been innocent—all this is decidedly reprehensible and

mischievous. Taking part to this extent with the offender, is too much like giving countenance and protection to the offence. It is, in some measure, identifying ourselves with those who are to blame. By showing so much indulgence to their fault, we virtually, as it were, adopt and repeat it. And thus we give our adversaries a double handle for "blaspheming the name and the doctrine of God," by giving them room for alleging that we have no great indignation against sin, provided it be committed by those who are of the same religious creed, and the same religious profession with ourselves. Let us avoid this: but, on the other hand, let us be careful not to give a deeper coloring, and not to give a wider publicity to the failings and misdeeds of our Christian neighbors, than the real merits of the case warrant, and the successful correction of the evil may require. Let charity be exercised as far as is consistent with truth, which must be paramount to every other consideration. And thus, let nothing be unnecessarily, or rashly, added to the means with which irreligious men are already too amply provided, for "blaspheming the name and the doctrine of God."

3. Lastly, let us scrupulously abstain, in our own conduct, from every thing of which advantage may be taken, for that unhallowed purpose. Whatever men may think or say of us, it should be our constant study to be "holy in all manner of conversation." But it is lawful and proper for us to derive a motive for cultivating that character, with peculiar care and diligence, from the effect which it may have, not merely in encouraging our fellow-Christians, but also in lessening both the means, and the spirit, of hostility in those who are inimical to the gospel. For this end, it becomes us to "walk in wisdom towards them that are without;" to "keep a bridle on our tongue while the wicked are before us;" to "abstain from the very appearance of evil;" and "not to let our good be evil spoken of." We must not, indeed, allow ourselves to be allured into ostentation and hypocrisy. We must not be guilty of

mean compliances—of sneaking compromises—of cowardly concealments. We must not commit any thing that is sinful, in order to hide a more flagrant iniquity, or to make others believe that we possess the virtues of which our conscience tells us that we are destitute. We must be bold, and honest, and truthful. And then, so far as it can be made consistent with these essential qualities, we must be prudent and circumspect in every part of our behavior—anxious to keep ourselves free from the suspicion, as well as from the reality of unrighteousness—faithful in all the duties and transactions of our peculiar calling, or our peculiar circumstances—ready to make sacrifices even of what we might otherwise withhold, in order to prevent offence being taken by those who are observing us—and in all things, we must endeavor to "let our light so shine before men" that "whereas they are disposed to speak against us as evil-doers, they may, by our good works which they shall behold, glorify God on the day of visitation." Thus shall we work out our own salvation, and as far as we are concerned, thus shall we prevent "the name and the work of God from being blasphemed," and promote the influence of "pure and undefiled religion" among our brethren of mankind.

SERMON IX.

THE IMPERFECTIONS OF CHRISTIANS NO ARGUMENT AGAINST CHRISTIANITY.

1 TIMOTHY vi. 1.

"*Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.*"

In a former discourse on these words, we proposed to consider the objection to Christianity which is drawn from the sinful conduct of those who have embraced it. We first directed your attention to the alleged fact on which the objection is made to rest, and endeavored to show you that it is much exaggerated. We stated that it is exaggerated in these four ways; first, by a determination to censure, with or without reason, the conduct of Christ's professed followers; secondly, by the fault of one Christian being transferred and imputed to Christians in general; thirdly, by considering one part of the Christian's conduct as a test of his real and substantial character, and fourthly, by an uncandid and unwarranted comparison of his deportment, with the religion to which he appeals as the standard of his faith and manners.

We now go on to show, that the fact in question cannot be reasonably adduced to invalidate the truth of Christianity, or constitute any just cause of offence against that system of religion.

Now, it may be observed in general, that the great and decisive question respecting the truth of Christianity, is not a question of practical effects, any more than it is a question of abstract speculation, but simply a question of fact—of fact, which is obvious to every understanding, and which offers itself on the evidence of testimony. If Jesus Christ and his apostles wrought miracles in support of their mission—if we be satisfied that they were thus honored with the sanction of divine authority—then it behoves us, on every principle of reason and common sense, to admit the doctrine which they preached as the doctrine of God. Having ascertained and acknowledged the reality of this circumstance, we have ascertained and acknowledged that which leads us, not by any doubtful or circuitous argument, but directly and irresistibly, to receive the gospel as a true revelation. Of the particulars, indeed, of which this revelation consists, we may entertain different opinions; but there can be one opinion only with regard to its existence, and our consequent obligation to embrace it in some form or other. When, therefore, various objections, such as the one we are discussing, are brought forward against it, we do not say that they are altogether unmeaning, or may not have a certain effect in modifying our views of it; but, holding by the conviction which has been laid on the deep, and broad, and strong foundation of well attested fact, we say that they must be destitute of all solidity as to the purpose for which they are adduced; they must arise from ignorance, misconception, or perverseness; and cannot, with any propriety, affect our faith. They may afford us matter of regret; they may present to us difficulties that we cannot solve; they may furnish us with subjects of curious or of useful inquiry; but as reasons for rejecting Christianity, or for treating it with distrust, they are absolutely

futile and inadmissible. If any one would persuade us, that we should not believe in the Christian religion, he must first prove, that God gave no miraculous attestation to its Author and original propagators. If he succeed in his proof, the use of every subordinate argument is thereby superseded for showing it to be "a cunningly devised fable." But if he fail in this attempt, and we be still convinced, that it enjoyed the countenance of heaven in the way alluded to, it is impossible for us, in the very nature of things, to doubt of its truth, or to consider it as substantially false, notwithstanding all the exceptions to it which he is able to state, however numerous, and however pointed. When therefore, it is urged that it cannot be a revelation from God, because those who have embraced it, continue to lead wicked lives, which it must be the object of a divine revelation to prevent, we may allow the premises, but we must deny the conclusion. Men may reject what is true, and disobey legal authority; this is what they do every day. But such rejection and disobedience neither alter the nature of that truth, nor destroy the legitimacy of that authority. In the same way, the Christian religion, being established on grounds which have the sanction of God to support them, cannot be deprived of its claims to our submissive regard, because those who profess to believe in it, do not act uniformly as it requires. "Let God be true, and every man a liar."

The objection must suppose, that the wickedness of professing Christians arises either from Christianity being directly immoral in its influence, or from its being deficient in power to make its votaries holy.

Now, that its influence is far from being directly immoral will be granted, without hesitation, by every one, who is at all acquainted with its spirit, and its principles. It has a character so completely opposite to this, that it is commonly accused by its enemies of being severely and unnecessarily strict, inasmuch as it requires us to conform ourselves to a perfect law, and to imitate a perfect example. Some of its doctrines, indeed, have

been made a pretext for licentious conduct; but this is only a proof that the best things are frequently most abused; for these doctrines, when fairly represented and rationally understood, are all found to be "according to godliness." They furnish occasion for the exercise of some grace, or motives for the performance of some duty, or reasons for being universally devoted to the will of God. They encourage vice in those only who take partial views of them; who seek for countenance to their iniquities; who are distinguished by fanaticism, or by profligacy, or by a melancholy combination of both. What else, indeed, can be the character of those who sin because the goodness of God abounds? And besides, although these doctrines, singly considered, should seem to countenance vicious indulgence, which yet must be explicitly, as it can be fairly, denied, yet this apparent tendency is entirely removed, when they are viewed, as they always ought to be viewed, in connexion with the preceptive part of the gospel, whose unrivalled purity is above all suspicion.

The objection, therefore, must owe its force to the other alternative that was stated. It must suppose that Christianity is deficient in power, or not properly calculated to make its votaries holy. For the purpose of determining this point, let us first examine that religion, as far as the allegation goes; and then let us look at the effects which it has actually produced on the moral character of its adherents.

Wherein, then does its alleged deficiency consist? In what respect is it naturally inefficacious, for making men virtuous and good? Is it defective in the plainness and energy of its precepts? Nothing can be plainer, or more forcible, than the manner in which it proposes its rules for the regulation of our conduct. The ten commandments given by Moses, the discourses of our Saviour, and the practical parts of the Epistles, are examples of this which must excite the admiration of every candid reader. In these, the actions we are to avoid, and those we are to perform, are stated so clearly, that

"he who runs may read;" and they are stated so positively, as to exclude all doubt of their intended obligation. And, what is particularly worthy of remark, the precepts of the gospel are so generally diffused over the sacred records, that, in every page we peruse, they are laid down to us in some shape or other; and to become acquainted with any part of the scripture is, in other words, to become acquainted with a certain portion of our duty.

Again, is Christianity defective on the extent of its morality. Its morality could not be more extensive than it actually is. There is no vice which it does not prohibit: there is no virtue which it does not enjoin. It does not forbid merely great and flagrant crimes; it forbids all those lesser sins, which so often escape the notice of a corrupted world, and teaches us that no sin whatever can be innocently indulged. It does not prescribe merely the more obvious duties of life; it prescribes every duty that arises from the various circumstances and relations in which we are placed. It does not recommend merely those shining excellencies of conduct which attract the public gaze, and produce mighty and striking effects; it recommends also, with no less earnestness, the exercise of those humble and unassuming graces which are equally important to the happiness of mankind, though seen by no eye but His, from whom nothing can be concealed. It does not inculcate merely rectitude of external deportment, with which so many are disposed to rest contented: it inculcates, with peculiar force and frequency, that internal purity, that habitual holiness, in all the thoughts and affections of the heart, which is the best security that can be desired for a well-ordered life and conversation. It does not say merely, that we must be virtuous and good; it says, that we must always abound in godliness and good works, and that our path must be like "the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The gospel is not defective then, in the extent of its morality.

Is it defective in the principles on which its morality is founded? That might be affirmed, if it inculcated the principle of fictitious honor, which this moment stimulates to noble deeds, and the next gives its countenance to boundless dissipation and bloody revenge; or the principle of sentimental feeling, which is but a modification of passion, and cannot therefore be trusted as a guide of conduct; or the principle of selfishness, which teaches us to stifle the suggestions, and laugh at the pretensions of disinterested benevolence; or the principle of utility, which is so liable to mistake, and must be so useless to the bulk of mankind, who are incapable of taking comprehensive views; or any other principle which reaches no higher than the erring reason, or more unsettled passions of men, and extends no farther than the limited interests and pleasures of the world. But the principles of Christian morality are of a quite different and infinitely more perfect kind, and fitted, by their natural and unfettered operation, to form a character of unblemished and superlative worth. Profound regard for the authority of Him who made us, whose subjects we now are, to whom we are finally accountable, and who possesses the most sacred and unquestionable title to our unreserved homage; firm and lively faith in the existence and perfections of God, and in the various declarations and discoveries of his will which are contained in the Holy Scriptures; supreme love and ardent gratitude to that Being who is infinitely amiable in himself, and whose unbounded mercy in Christ Jesus has laid us under obligations to obedience, the most cheerful and devoted; a heartfelt reliance upon that sacrifice of himself, by which the Son of God redeemed sinners from the guilt and the dominion of sin, and thereby established a claim to their homage and submission which it will require the services of an eternity to satisfy; that charity towards all our brethren of mankind which, enlightened, directed, and invigorated by the revelation of the grace of God, and by the influences of his Holy Spirit, extends as far as the

habitations of men are found, elevates us above the sordid wish of living to ourselves, and consists in so loving each other as Christ has loved us; a pure desire and rational hope of attaining to the happiness of heaven, where we shall enjoy communion with him whose name is Holy, and have for our companions "the angels who kept their first estate," and "the spirits of just men made perfect,"—these, and such as these, are the principles on which the gospel proposes to form the temper and conduct of its votaries; and surely it cannot be owing to any imperfection in these principles that professing Christians are chargeable with acts of wickedness; for we cannot conceive principles more powerfully calculated to subdue the boldest passions, to awaken and cherish the best affections, to dissuade from every thing that is in the least degree unholy, and to secure a constant, faithful, and conscientious performance of duty.

Is Christianity defective, then, in the sanctions with which its laws are enforced? These sanctions are fitted to awe the stoutest, and to animate the coldest heart. They exclude not the happiness and the misery that may be experienced in this mixed and transitory state, as the appointed consequences of virtue and vice in every part of God's dominions. But they are much more extended, interesting, and impressive, than any thing that can be either suffered or enjoyed in a present world, or at the hand of human beings. They promise the favor, and they threaten the displeasure, not of the mightiest of the children of men, but of Him who has every thing at his command; who "loveth righteousness and hateth iniquity," whose "favor is better than life" and whose displeasure is worse than death. And they direct our views forward to a judgment-day, to a solemn reckoning, to a sentence that shall never be recalled, to an entrance into the regions of unspeakable and immortal joy, and to "everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power." When such are the rewards which Chris-

tianity annexes to obedience, and such the punishments which it denounces against the rebellious and ungodly, no doubt, with respect to the sufficiency of its sanctions, can remain in any mind which knows what it is to be deterred by fear, or stimulated by hope; or which feels the distinction that subsists between the good and the evil, the blessing and the curse.

Is it defective in the encouragements which it gives to virtuous exertions? What encouragements greater than these—an assurance that "the eye of God is ever upon the righteous, and his ear open to their cry,"—an assurance that the afflictions to which their virtue may subject them, shall be made conducive to their improvement,—an assurance that, in living holy, they are living to the praise of that Saviour who redeemed them by his own blood,—an assurance that every deed of charity shall be accounted and rewarded by Jesus, as "done unto Himself,"—an assurance that, whereas they are weak and insufficient of themselves, the Spirit of all might shall be sent to their assistance,—an assurance that they are walking in that path which has been trodden by thousands before them, who are now rejoicing around the throne of God,—an assurance that the time is fast approaching, when all their labors of suffering and of active virtue shall be crowned with honor and glory, in the everlasting kingdom of their Father? Such being the assurances explicitly given in Scripture, the gospel cannot possibly be considered as deficient in the encouragements, with which it supports and animates the Christian in that holy path, by which it is appointed that he shall journey to the heavenly world.

Is it defective, I ask, in the last place, in the external means which it prescribes, for promoting the spiritual improvement of the Christian? Here also, it is wholly unexceptionable. It puts into his hands a volume, which is "given by inspiration, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction in righteousness, that as a man of God, he may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." It

appoints qualified persons to explain to him the meaning of these scriptures; to instruct him in every part of his duty; to remind him of what he owes to God, to his neighbor, and to himself; to warn him when he goes astray; to encourage him in the pursuit of holiness; and to use every means by which he may be made to abound yet more and more, in all the things that are excellent. It consecrates one day in seven to rest from ordinary labor, to give him a special opportunity of examining his heart, of reviewing his past conduct, and of providing an additional store of knowledge and wisdom for his guidance in future. It institutes certain ordinances, by which his moral principles are strengthened; and by which, to the obligations that already bind him, there is superadded that which arises from a voluntary and solemn dedication of himself to the love and practice of goodness. It prescribes to him the exercise of habitual prayer, by which his mind is accustomed to the contemplation of divine excellence, and by which he derives from heaven, the grace and strength that are requisite for enabling him to walk in the ways of God's commandments. And, what is of the utmost consequence, it does not merely recommend the use of these means as a source of improvement and advantage, but makes it a subject of authoritative appointment, and commands it as a duty, which we are under as strict obligations to perform, as any of the other duties required of us by the laws of God.

In all the views now taken of the moral influence of the gospel, it evidently appears, that no defect whatever can be ascribed to it in that particular. On the contrary, it seems perfectly calculated, by the qualities we have found it to possess, to purify, in an extraordinary measure, the heart and the character of its adherents. It seems calculated to produce this effect, not only above all the religious and moral systems which have yet appeared in the world, but above any system which the unaided powers of man can be reasonably supposed capable of forming. The survey of it which has been

taken, necessarily short and rapid, is yet sufficient, we presume, to establish the conclusion at which we aim. To whatever cause the wickedness of professing Christians may be owing, it cannot be attributed to any want of fitness in the Christian system to produce a contrary character, but is in direct opposition to the whole spirit, and design, and tendency of that system. And, therefore, instead of considering the fact on which so much stress is often laid by the enemies of our faith, as any proof against its divine origin, we should look to the moral character of that faith itself, as being not only worthy of the God from whom it professes to come, but capable of being traced to no inferior source, and consequently, as furnishing a powerful and irresistible evidence, for the divinity of our holy religion.

We have still to consider the effects which Christianity has actually produced, on the moral character of its adherents. But that point we must reserve as the subject of another discourse; and we shall now conclude with a few remarks, by way of improvement.

When we reflect on the inherent excellence and purifying tendency of the gospel, and contrast it, in these respects, with the conduct actually exhibited by many who profess attachment to it, there is indeed much reason for wonder and regret—for wonder that the effect is so very unlike the cause which we suppose to operate, and for regret that there should be so much unworthiness amidst such manifold and mighty advantages. It surely becomes those who call themselves Christians, and yet lead unholy lives, to think seriously of the manner in which this inconsistency affects their character and their prospects. It renders them chargeable with being "enemies to God by wicked works," while they enjoy the light which should guide them in the path of righteousness, and profess to walk in that path, while yet they are travelling in the way of transgressors: and being thus enemies to God, what can all their privileges however valuable, and all their pretensions, however sacred, do for them, when they are called to give

in their account?—what but aggravate the condemnation to which they must be doomed in the eternal judgment? Let me, therefore, entreat you to search and try yourselves, that you may discover your sinfulness and your danger, in their full extent, that you may be aware how far you are from the kingdom of heaven, though you are living amidst the outward benefits of the gospel dispensation, and that you may be persuaded to embrace that gospel in faith and love, having your hearts renewed and sanctified by its quickening power, and all your principles, and affections, and conduct, subjected to its holy government.

And let not this discussion be lost upon real Christians. It becomes you, my believing friends, to "stir up the grace that is in you," that you may live more "unblameably and irreproveably" in the sight of your brethren and of the world; to cherish the faith that you have placed in Jesus, that it may exert a still more purifying influence on your "heart, out of which are the issues of life;" to be more watchful against temptation, and more determined in resisting it; to keep yourselves more from the snares and allurements of "the world, that lieth in wickedness;" and to pray, more frequently and more fervently, for that Divine Spirit, through whom alone you can be preserved from the defilements of sin, and be enabled to "walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called." Live thus, and you will not only work out your own salvation, but you will be instrumental in promoting the salvation of others, in preventing "the name and the doctrine of God from being blasphemed," and in promoting the prosperity and influence of "the glorious gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

SERMON X.

THE IMPERFECTIONS OF CHRISTIANS NO ARGUMENT AGAINST CHRISTIANITY.

1 TIMOTHY vi. 1.

"*Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.*"

In entering on the consideration of these words, we proposed to consider the objection to Christianity which is drawn from the sinful conduct of those who have embraced it. We, first, directed your attention to the alleged fact on which the objection is made to rest, and endeavored to show you that it is much exaggerated. We next proceeded to show you, that the fact in question cannot be reasonably adduced to invalidate the truth of Christianity, or to constitute any just cause of offence against that system of religion. Here we remarked, that the objection must suppose that the wickedness of professing Christians arises either from Christianity being directly immoral in its influence, or from its being deficient in power to make its votaries holy. The first part of this alternative we discarded, as what no person would presume to maintain. And, in dis-

cussing the second part of it, we took occasion to prove that Christianity is not deficient in the plainness and energy of its precepts—nor in the extent of its morality—nor in the principles on which its morality is founded—nor in the sanctions by which its duties are enforced—nor in the encouragements which it gives to holy exertion—nor in the external means which it prescribes for promoting the spiritual improvement of the Christian. But then the argument is not complete, till we have considered the effects which Christianity has produced on the moral character of its adherents. And it is to this point we are to speak in the sequel of the present discourse.

1. Let it be considered what a multitude of excellent characters have been formed by the influence of the gospel. From its first establishment down to the present day, every successive age has had a number of individuals and of families by whom its sanctifying power has been deeply felt and practically exhibited.

On looking into the history of its progress and effects, we observe that it no sooner obtained a footing, than it began to change the moral aspect of society, wherever, at least, the profession of it prevailed. By thousands it was acknowledged as a divine religion; and by a very great proportion of these its spirit was imbibed, and its precepts were obeyed. They were converted by it from the abominations of heathenism, and from the corruptions of Judaism; they did not merely abandon a speculative error, and adopt a speculative truth; it was not a mere improvement in point of doctrine: it was a total renovation in their heart and life. They became humane and pure, meek and temperate; anxious to "depart from all iniquity," and zealous in the cultivation of universal holiness; eminent for their personal virtues, —for piety to God, and benevolence to men. This is no imaginary representation—no extravagant picture of fancy—no exaggerated statement to support an otherwise untenable hypothesis. It is a well authenticated fact, which stands upon record, and of which every one

must be satisfied who is acquainted with the early history of the church: a fact, which, in those times, attracted the notice and excited the admiration of the bitterest enemies of Christianity; and which operated powerfully in recommending that system to the respect, the faith, and the obedience both of Jew and Gentile. But this fact was not limited to the primitive times of Christianity. It has existed, more or less, in every age; we cannot fix our eyes on a single page in the history of our religion, in which its triumphs over the bad passions and evil habits of mankind have not been conspicuous. Even in that dark period, when the knowledge of its genuine doctrines seemed to be lost; when it had assumed a form the most unfavorable to morality—when it appeared to be overwhelmed with the most debasing corruption; even then, amidst all these disadvantages, it had its votaries, whom it elevated far above the pollutions of the world, and adorned at once with the most splendid and the most amiable virtues. And since the era of the Reformation, which rescued it from the fooleries of superstition, and from the multiform and numerous errors which had been industriously intermingled with its sacred truths, it has given many striking proofs of its tendency to purify the affections, to ameliorate the conduct, and to make men what they ought to be, as subjects of God's righteous government. If we look around us in the present day, we discover on every hand its powerful operation on the active principles of those who have embraced it. We observe it giving dignity to personal deportment; filling the domestic circle with love and harmony; beautifying social life with the graces of meekness, benevolence, and mercy; and throwing a lustre on national character, far above that which distinguished the brightest periods of Greece and Rome. We do not say, indeed, that it has ever made any man perfect; or that those who have embraced it are, in consequence of its influence, altogether free from vice. But we say, that it has superinduced on their character so much moral

excellence, as to render them objects which we must contemplate with feelings of complacency, with sentiments of respect. How many individuals are there, who abound in godliness and good works, and whose superior virtue we can trace to no other cause, than the sanctifying power of Christian truth! They themselves acknowledge that it is this which constrains them to abstain from vice, and to do the holy will of God. And while it must be confessed, that they frequently fall short in the performance of duty, it is evident, at the same time, that they deeply regret their imperfections, that they habitually endeavor to "perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord," and that they succeed so far, at least, as to establish their right to a kind and a degree of approbation, which we can never bestow upon those whose life has been formed on a different model. In short, that, among those who have professed the gospel, there have been many trained to a high measure of moral worth under its influence, and its influence alone, is a fact which every age has witnessed, which must be admitted by every person who is at all acquainted with the progress of Christianity, or disposed to view it with a candid eye; and which must have existed to an extent far greater than we have had access to know, or to observe, seeing that the influence of religion has been chiefly experienced by those who have moved in the humble and more tranquil walks of life, and has purified thousands and millions whose virtues have never been heard of, and never witnessed, beyond the narrow sphere, or obscure occupation, in which providence had cast their lot.

2. But the holy tendency of the gospel is obvious, not only from its powerful effect on those who have truly believed its divine origin, and given a candid reception to its doctrines; the same thing may be seen in the improved moral condition of those also, who have either given a mere speculative assent to it, or who are acquainted only with its tenets and precepts, or who live merely in countries where it is professed. In these cases, it has con-

confessedly raised the tone of public morals, put a stop to practices which disgraced human nature, given rise to the most humane and useful institutions, introduced a more perfect standard of moral judgment, and infused into the mind of society at large a spirit of propriety, of generosity, of rectitude, and of decency, which has elevated man above his ordinary level, and which no other system has ever been able to inspire. The history of the gospel furnishes us with a detail of interesting and incontrovertible facts, which demonstrate, that Christianity has neither been useless nor detrimental as a moral system; that it has maintained an influence peculiar to itself, over the sentiments and manners of mankind; and that this influence has been at once powerful, important, and extensive. But if it has been so efficient with regard to thousands and myriads who have not experienced individually its converting and saving power, of how much real native energy, in this respect, must it be possessed, and how admirably calculated must it be to purify those, who receive it as a divine religion? Although we had never seen one instance of its complete personal efficacy, we could not possibly, without giving up all our ideas of tracing effects to their causes, and of reasoning by analogy, have denied, or even questioned, its possession of a direct and vigorous tendency to discourage the practice of sin, and to promote the reign of holiness in the world. The argument is equally simple and irresistible. If the gospel have actually reformed and greatly improved the character of those, who have merely lived in countries where it has been known and professed, then surely it cannot be deficient in power, to carry, to high and distinguished attainments in virtue, such as have truly imbibed its spirit, and yielded themselves to its guidance. And though this, of itself, is not a sufficient ground for believing Christianity to be of heavenly origin, it is at least quite adequate to the purpose of meeting and nullifying the objection that we are discussing.

3. It is not enough, however, to state that there are many who show in their conduct, the holy tendency and sanctifying power of Christianity—that there are, and have been, multitudes of Christians who have adorned their religion by the exercise of every virtue—it is proper to state, in addition to this, the contrast which their present conduct exhibits to their former conduct, and also to the deportment of others, who have rejected the gospel, or who have never heard of its existence. At this contrast we have already hinted; but though it by no means requires a long illustration, it certainly deserves a more particular notice, as being essential to a complete view, and a just decision, of the subject.

We are not to rest satisfied with considering simply what the Christian is. We must compare what he is with what he was before he embraced the gospel. This shows the degree of power which that religion has to make its votaries holy. He who is brought from the love and practice of the most abominable vices—from evil habits of the most inveterate kind, to take delight in the law of God, and in the performance of duty, has been unquestionably constrained by motives of no ordinary strength, and has paid a species of homage to the system, by which this revolution has been effected in his character, which our adversaries will in vain attempt to account for on their usual principles.

It is right also, to compare the moral character of the Christian, with that of others who have not known or adopted the same religious faith. While he is "denying ungodliness and worldly affections," they are not even sensible that there is much guilt or evil in these things. While he is "living soberly, righteously, and godly," they are indulging freely in the gratification of every criminal appetite and passion. While he is acting on a fixed and steady principle of regard to the authority of God, they are anxious only in the pursuit of worldly interests, or of sensual pleasure, and consider nothing as valuable which does not contribute to these unworthy ends. While he is habitually regulating his conduct by

standard of unmingled excellence, and is making gradual approaches to the perfection at which he constantly aims, they are conforming to maxims which have their foundation in error; they are addicted to many vices upon system, and under the very sanction of their religion, disgracing themselves by practices the most odious and detestable. Let the adversaries of our faith consider this—Let them recollect that the votaries of Christianity are distinguished by a species, and have attained a degree, of moral worth, which we shall in vain search for in the votaries of any other system whatever—let them recollect that the gospel has raised the character of the lowest of the people who have embraced it, incomparably higher in the scale of morality than the most accomplished disciple of the most eminent schools of philosophy has ever been able to reach—let them recollect that true Christians far exceed, in the purity and extent of their virtue, even those who, though they have not believed in the gospel, have yet borrowed many of its precepts, have been trained up under the prevalent influence of its spirit, and are accounted the most amiable and respectable of the men of the world—let them recollect these things, and then deny, if they can, not merely the superior, but the direct, and decided, and undeviating tendency of the Christian religion, to make those by whom it is adopted, remarkable for the love and the practice of genuine holiness.

4. It was formerly stated, that the fact upon which the objection we are considering is founded, is frequently exaggerated by the fault of one Christian being transferred or imputed to the whole church. But I have now to observe, that the fact is also most unfairly and injuriously misapplied in another way. Our adversaries make no distinction between real, and merely nominal Christians. And yet that such a distinction actually exists, and that it ought to be attended to, must be admitted by every one who has any pretensions to justice and candor. It is notorious that there are some whose belief in the truth of Christianity is merely speculative;

who cannot deny that the religion of Jesus is supported by sufficient evidence, but who have no distinct and impressive views of its divine nature, and infinite importance; who consider it as a system of abstract doctrine, and never recognise or think of it as the rule of conduct which they must observe, or perish for ever. That it should have much practical influence on persons, by whom it is regarded in this cold and distant manner, is not to be expected: their ideas of it are extremely imperfect: they hate its spirit: they wish it to be different from what it is: they admit it to be true, because they cannot prove it to be false: and give it such a reception in their minds, as is given by a habitual drunkard to the maxim that drunkenness is a wicked and ruinous practice, while, with this conviction, which his understanding cannot refuse, he goes on to indulge as formerly in the vice of intemperance.

There are many, too, who have assumed the profession of Christianity, without any conviction at all respecting its credibility, but because they have been born and educated in a Christian country, and are naturally desirous to comply with the fashion that prevails around them. They might be offended were we to call them infidels; but neither can they be denominated believers: they are in a great measure ignorant of the religion which they appear to have embraced; they are careless whether it be of divine institution, or of human device; all their concern is to move quietly down the stream of custom, and not to disturb themselves with inquiries into the nature, and strict compliance with the requisitions, of a religion of which they know but little, and think it of no consequence to learn more. To look for habitual resistance in persons of this description to the temptations of sin, or for high attainments in holiness and piety, is not less absurd than to look with confidence for gold in every object, the surface of which has accidentally received a yellow tinge.

There are not a few also, who profess to be Christians, while, in their hearts, they do not believe one word of the gospel. They have some sinister purposes to serve, and the better to accomplish these, they pretend to be followers of Christ, and observe such forms as shall demonstrate them to be so, in the vague and indiscriminating estimation of the world; but all the while they are in reality unbelievers; they reject Christ as a messenger from God, and accordingly despise the authority of his gospel. And is it reasonable to be disappointed because such persons do not exhibit a character regulated by its precepts, or pervaded by its temper? Is it any thing but folly in the extreme, to argue on the supposition that they shall obey a system of religion which they consider to be nothing else than "a cunningly devised fable;" or that they shall submit to its commandments any farther than is absolutely requisite to promote the mean and interested ends which they have in view? With equal propriety may we feel and express surprise that an enemy's spy, who assumes our dress, and makes occasional use of our language, the more effectually to deceive us, will not also conform himself to all our laws, strive to guard us from danger, labor to promote our prosperity, and act in every respect like a faithful friend and a patriotic subject.

In all these cases, there is a gross absurdity in expecting such a virtuous deportment as will be creditable to the gospel: and there is the same gross absurdity in imputing to the gospel the defects and iniquities of those who are unacquainted with it, or who do not love it, or who cordially reject it. The gospel surely cannot be made to answer for the crimes of speculatists, and hypocrites, and infidels, without being subjected to a test, which would have equally condemned it, whatever had been the nature or degree of its evidence. We say, let it be judged of by its own intrinsic merits and uniform tendency; or even let it be judged of by the conduct of those who have embraced it in faith, and love, and reality; and we feel confident that the result

will be decidedly favorable to its claims on our profound and unlimited regard. For we maintain that, while it is inherently calculated to make men "holy in all manner of conversation," it has actually produced that effect in numberless instances; and at the same time, introduced a most happy improvement of the moral sentiments and behavior of those who have merely come within the range of its indirect and unacknowledged influence.

5. That the gospel has not been more generally efficacious in reforming mankind, and in perfecting the character of its votaries, is to be accounted for in various ways. Without entering into any detail, however, I may merely mention one general principle which appears to solve the whole difficulty. The gospel is not a system of compulsion. It is a dispensation given to beings who have a particular moral constitution; and to the nature and circumstances of that constitution it is adapted by its infinitely wise Author. We are endowed with powers of investigation, of judgment, and of choice —with all the powers, in short, which are necessary to constitute us voluntary agents; and for the exercise of these powers, and in consequence of possessing them, we are finally responsible to God. Now on this essential character of our condition, as subjects of God's moral government, the gospel is offered to us. It is not forced upon us by any physical necessity: its Author does not propose to treat us as machines, and compel us to accept of it, and yield to it, in defiance of the very faculties and capacities with which He himself has invested us. He has supported it by certain evidences which we are called on to examine, that we may be rationally satisfied of its truth. He has put into it certain doctrines and precepts, which we are required to investigate in order to know what they are, and in what sense they form a part of revelation. He has presented to us certain motives, not to overpower us with a sort of mechanical and irresistible force—but to exercise our affections, to work upon our hopes and our fears,

our hatred and our love, in a manner accommodated to the original nature which he has conferred upon us as rational and accountable beings. And, in all these views, it is certainly not to be objected to the gospel, that many to whom it is offered should be blind to its excellence and its credibility; that they should, from rash or perverted judgments, fall frequently into practical error; that their passions and their prejudices should sometimes overcome their convictions of truth, and their sense of duty; that the objects of sense should, in certain circumstances of temptation and difficulty, be more regarded by them than the objects of faith; that they should occasionally forget their obligations, neglect the proper means of resisting the allurements of sin, fall a prey to snares against which they have made no adequate provision, and ever choose the evil, while they despise the good that is set before them. To find fault, therefore, with the little comparative efficacy of Christianity in reclaiming and sanctifying men, is in fact to complain that man is constituted, as he is, a voluntary and accountable agent; or that God has not made Christianity a system of absolute compulsion, and thus destroyed the essential nature by which we are distinguished from the other creatures of this world. Such a complaint is unquestionably foolish: but we have no reason to pursue the argument farther than this step to which we have brought it, that the failure of the gospel to make all men holy, is to be charged not against the gospel itself, but against the corruption and perversity of men; who, though "light has come into the world, choose the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds are evil;" and who, in consequence of this undue preference, must, of course, continue to have "fellowship with the unprofitable and sinful works of darkness."

We should now point out the way in which Christians ought to act, so as that the word and the doctrine of God be not blasphemed. This may be considered as the subject which the apostle has more im-

mediately in his eye; and it may be comprehended under the following heads.

1. There is the general duty of a practical and unreserved submission to God's will as revealed in the gospel.

2. There is a faithful and conscientious discharge of the duties which belong to the several relations in which we stand, and the various circumstances in which we are placed.

3. There is a willing sacrifice of certain rights, and privileges, and comforts, on retaining which we might properly insist, in certain circumstances, but which it is incumbent upon us to forego when the cause of Christianity requires it.

4. There is a habitual reference to those great and influential principles which we have embraced as Christians, and which are both intended and calculated, to produce sanctifying effects, in more than an ordinary measure.

5. And there is a constant and conscious dependance upon the divine Spirit, which itself operates, both as a guard and as an incitement in the path of life; and which prompts to that application by prayer for God's help, which we are so apt to forget, but which is necessary in order to procure for us what we thus need.

The illustration of these particulars, however, we must reserve for a future discourse.

In the mean time let us be thankful to God, that he has laid a foundation for our faith so strong, as to set at defiance the cavils and objections of its adversaries, and to satisfy us that the more we examine it, the more reason shall we see for clinging to it and resting upon it. If any thing could be supposed capable of shaking or overturning it and all that it sustains, it would be the unholy conduct of those who appeal to it, as the ground of their hope and confidence. And yet we see that it remains firm and sure, in spite of all their treachery and inconsistency. The gospel leads us to expect such un-

worthiness on their part. It does not profess to make them perfect in virtue as long as they are in this world. It only offers and promises to renovate, and sanctify, and improve, all who embrace it, in such a way and in such a degree, as may be expected from its agency on beings who still carry about with them the remains of corruption, and dwell in a world of temptation and wickedness. But it produces upon them a real, extensive, moral change, which no other system has ever accomplished, or pretended to accomplish: it raises them to high attainment in the excellence which God approves; and it thus gives an earnest of that sinless purity to which, through its instrumentality, they shall be exalted, in the heavenly state.

Let us be grateful also, in so far as we have personally experienced the transforming power of the gospel. This is a distinguished privilege, which we can never sufficiently acknowledge. It is a revolution of heart and character essential to our ultimate salvation—to our comfort here, and to our happiness hereafter. It has been accomplished by that grace of God to which we could lay no claim, and which has been as gratuitous, as it has been efficacious. It is an indication that we are interested in all the benefits of Christ's redemption. It is itself a part of the deliverance which he has wrought out for us by his sufferings and death. It is an evidence, an experimental and convincing proof, to ourselves, that Christianity is from God, and that "the Author and finisher of our faith" is "mighty to save." And it affords, through the medium of our sanctification, a proof to others of the truth, and the virtue, and the efficiency, of that glorious system in which we exhort them to believe. Let us therefore offer our unfeigned and cordial thanksgivings to Him by whose grace it is that "we are what we are;" and let us pray that he may enable us more and more to "prove what is his good, and holy, and acceptable will."

to avoid giving any color to it, or any ground for the wickedness or the imprudence of our conduc we would show our regard for the honor and suc the gospel among men, we must not only be holy common and general sense of that word; we moreover, be tender and circumspect in the whol of our life; we must "walk in wisdom towards that are without;" we must "abstain from the v pearance of evil;" we must "let our light so sh fore men, that they seeing our good works, may our Father which is in heaven."

SERMON XI.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS IN REFERENCE TO THE OBJECTION FOUNDED UPON THEIR IMPERFECTIONS.

1 TIMOTHY vi. 1.

"Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed."

THE unworthy conduct of professing Christians has been often brought forward as an objection to the truth of Christianity. We have shown you, that the alleged fact on which the objection is grounded, has been greatly exaggerated. And we have also shown you, that the fact being, in its real extent, admitted, does not warrant the conclusion drawn from it; because the gospel is not deficient, in its nature and tendency, to make its votaries holy; and because it has actually produced the most beneficial effects, on the moral dispositions and character of multitudes, who have subjected themselves to its governing power; and has even exercised an ameliorating influence on those who came merely within the sphere of its general and indirect operation.

But all this should not make us insensible, or indifferent, to that particular objection which we have thus considered and repelled. It should be our concern to remove every pretext for the objection—to do every thing which can uphold the credit of our religion, and to do nothing of which advantage may be taken to gainsay or to disparage it. It is not enough that we demonstrate, however clearly and convincingly, the unfairness of the attack which is made upon it by its adversaries: we should, moreover, strive to wrest from them the weapons which they employ for its injury or its destruction, and to give not the least color of justice to the hostility with which they assail it. We are called upon, by every motive of gratitude to the Saviour, of regard to the divine honor, and of compassion to the souls of men, who must be saved by Christianity, or not be saved at all, to abstain from all those actions and indulgences by which "the name or the doctrine of God may be blasphemed." This is the exhortation of the apostle, which we shall now endeavor to illustrate, by pointing out the way in which it is to be complied with, so as most effectually to answer the end for which it is given.

1. And, in the first place, we exhort you never to forget that the gospel is a practical system. It tells you of many things interesting in themselves, and with which it is important for you to be well acquainted. It presents to you various subjects of pleasing and useful meditation. It reveals doctrines on which to exercise your faith—examples which you are called to contemplate and admire—events which may excite your wonder, or stimulate your curiosity, or increase your knowledge of the ways of providence—promises on which you may build many a delightful hope—and assurances, from which you may derive the sweetest consolation. And a religion so furnished with what is excellent and momentous and delightful, is something which you may deem it honorable, and even find it advantageous, to profess before the world, as that of whose truth you

are convinced, and by whose power you expect to be redeemed. But, though in all these respects it can hardly fail to have some influence on your temper and conduct, still its influence will be enlarged and secured if you habitually bear in mind, that the gospel is intended, as well as fitted, to sanctify you; that one of its leading purposes is to raise you from the debasement of sin; and that its grand end cannot be accomplished upon you, unless it produce in you a conformity to the moral law, and a resemblance to the moral image of God. If you do not remember these things, or if your impression of them be feeble, indistinct, or desultory, then all that you have learned of Christianity, all that you see in it, and all that you anticipate from it, will have little efficacy in promoting your superiority to what is evil, and your cultivation of what is good. But by having that impression strong upon your mind, and by having it ever present with you, the whole record of the gospel will prove, at all times, in all places, and in all circumstances, a directory to guide you, a law to restrain you, and a motive to animate you, in performing your work of righteousness and self-denial. To whatever part of it your attention is directed, you will derive from it some lesson of virtue—some lesson that will be of service in deepening your humility, in warming your devotion, in invigorating your resistance to temptation, in elevating you above the love and the pollutions of the world, in purifying you from the corruptions of sense, in giving more integrity to your dealings, more cheerfulness to your patience, more strictness to your sobriety, more ardor, more enlargement, more activity to your benevolence. Such lessons will accompany all your thoughts of Christianity, for you will be perpetually seeking for them, and you can never fail to discover them; and they will come home to you with constraining force, because you carry along with you the principle, that it is the divine purpose of Christianity to teach and to enforce them. When you turn your mind to any one of its doctrinal truths, you will consider that it

is not only to be believed, but that it is to make you free, in some respect or other, from the dominion of iniquity. When you meet with any precept, you will recollect that it is not merely a proof of the perfection of that morality which revelation inculcates, but a rule for your deportment in that branch of holiness to which it refers. When you cast your eye upon the delineation of a character, you will view it as not only held out to attract or to interest you, but as set before you to warn you against certain offences, or to recommend the practice of certain virtues. When any promise occurs to you as comfortable in the midst of distress, it will not only shed the blessing of tranquillity over your afflicted spirit, but it will bend your will into more perfect conformity to the will of God, and stir you up to the discharge of every duty peculiar to a season of trial and suffering. When the prospect of heaven offers itself to your view, it will not only elevate and enliven you with hope, but it will excite you to the cultivation of that purity of affection and that holiness of life, which constitute your appointed meetness for the enjoyments of the celestial world. In short, there is nothing in the whole range of the gospel, however minute it may be, and however inconsiderable and unworthy of notice it may be deemed by the too speculative believer, which will not speak to you a language bearing, in one way or other, on your improvement in "whatsoever things are pure, or true, or lovely, or of good report." And thus, by continually realizing its practical character, and authority, and extent, it will exercise a ceaseless and universal sway over your temper and conversation and conduct: it will produce a degree of watchfulness against sin, and a minuteness, as well as an extent of obedience, which could not otherwise have existed; and it will cause you to exhibit such a holy consistency of behavior, as shall command the respect or win the forbearance of gainsayers, for that religion which makes you so fruitful in every good word and work. In this

ay, then, see that you prevent "the name and the octrine of God from being blasphemed."

2. In the second place, with the same view we ex-ort you to a faithful and conscientious discharge of the uties which belong to the several relations in which ou stand, and the various circumstances in which you re placed. There are certain duties which are com-on to all men, whatever be their particular situations: ut there are other duties, peculiar to the condition in hich individuals, or classes of individuals, may happen o stand, according to the providential arrangement of heir lot. Now while you fulfil the former with all dil-gence, let me entreat you to be specially careful to ulfil the latter also, with scrupulous and irreproachable idelity. There are many who pay a decent, and per-aps exemplary regard, to the duties which are common o all, but who are found much less strict and attentive n the performance of their peculiar duties. And herein hey not merely manifest a very gross and injurious nconsistency, but by the total neglect, or partial ob-ervance, of those moral obligations, which are usually f most consequence to society, and most confidently xpected as the result of Christian faith, they open the ouths of its enemies and give them occasion to speak vil of it. Whereas, would believers, while they study general conformity to its precepts, be particularly rict and conscientious, in doing whatever is incumbent n them in the different stations which they occupy, eir goodness would force itself upon the notice of the ost careless, and secure the homage of the most in-terate of the adversaries of the gospel. It is for this ason among others, that our Saviour and his apostles re never contented with merely inculcating holiness on en generally, or in terms of general import. They re much more circumstantial and detailed in the in-ractions which they issue in the name of the Lord. hey call upon Christians, to remember the relations hich they bear to one another, and to the world around hem; to consider the dispositions and the behavior

these specially demand from them, and to feel and act accordingly. In our text, for example, the Apostle Paul specifies what is incumbent on Christian servants, being in the families of unbelieving masters. Persons in that sphere, humble as it is, are "set for the defence of the gospel;" and they defend it, when they avoid all undutiful conduct in their subordinate capacity, and show all good fidelity to those who are over them, and take care that nothing in their conduct as servants, give occasion to their masters to form an unfavorable opinion of the principles they profess, and the name by which they are called. And the principle which is implied in this exhortation to servants is equally applicable to masters. They also have their peculiar duties; and in their capacity as masters, an obligation is laid on them to recommend the religion they profess. A master who has a profession of religion may rest assured, that every act of injustice, oppression, or wickedness on his part, is calculated to have a most unhappy influence on the mind of his servants in reference to the gospel—to give them false conceptions of its nature and tendency, and thereby to place a stumbling-block in the way of their reception of its message, which all his exactness in the discharge of the other duties of his profession will be unable to remove. In the same manner, and with the same view, we may address the exhortation to individuals in all the various relations of life—to husbands and wives, to parents and children, to rulers and subjects, to neighbors and friends, to spiritual shepherds, and the flocks over whom God has made them overseers. To persons in each of these relative conditions, there belongs a certain class of duties; and to the performance of these duties, according to our respective places and relations, we must devote ourselves with singular activity and care, if we would consult the honor of Christianity, and ward off from it the reproaches of worldly and unbelieving men.

Nor is this all. The circumstances, as well as the relations of life, come under the government of the rule

ɜ considering. If you are poor, and in your pov-
re discontented, idle, and envious; if you are
ınd amidst your riches, are proud, and worldly,
ʼagant, and niggardly; if you are sick, and, under
ːessure of sickness, are impatient and fretful; if
ːe in health, and unmindful withal of your liability
ːase and to death; if you are in prosperity, and
ul of the vanity of all that is in the world, and speak
ːt as if your mountain were never to be brought
nd as if your cup were to be always running over;
are in adversity, and do not consider whose hand
ıat has disappointed and reduced you, and take
ful means to recover your lost fortunes, and are
ch disheartened as if the world were your all; if
ːe possessed of power, and make use of it to pro-
ɣour own aggrandizement, and are haughty and
ːilious to your inferiors, and forget to employ your
ːtion for the protection of the injured and the in-
t; if you have no influence and no authority over
, and are dissatisfied that you are destitute of such
tages, and cherish a spirit of insubordination, and
ɣith a scowling eye on those who wield the scep-
dominion, or command homage by their talents or
ɜtation; if you exhibit these sentiments and this
ct, then you may be in other points of character,
ıeless and harmless and without rebuke," but the
[Christianity will fasten on the failings and offences
ɣhich you are thus chargeable, where you should
been particularly ambitious to excel, and will
at the pretensions of a religion, which leaves its
ɛs so subject to corrupt and unholy passions, and
ɜ those by whom its truth is unacknowledged, and
luence unfelt. But on the other hand, if your
ːct corresponds with your lot, whatever it may be;
would manifest those graces which are proper
uitable to it; if, in the variety of conditions through
ı it may be necessary for you to pass, you are
ıed with those virtues which they severally and
ːsively require; if in want you are contented and

industrious; if in abundance you are humble and heavenly-minded, while your heart deviseth and your hand executeth liberal things; if in affliction you are patient and resigned under the mighty hand of God; if in bodily health and outward fortune, all is well and flourishing with you, and you are active in improving your opportunities of usefulness, and are sympathizing with those of your brethren who are doomed to travel in a more thorny path; and if you are "using the world and not abusing it," recollecting the evanescent nature of its fashions and its joys; if invested with power and influence over others, you employ these advantages in guarding them from oppression and injury, and in promoting their substantial welfare; if obscure and lonely, you have more to do with obedience than with commands, and yet grieve not that it is so, but cheerfully acquiesce in the arrangement which has made you insignificant, and are ready at all times to "give honor to whom honor is due," and to set your heart on that superiority which the humblest may attain, and which consists in a good conscience and a holy life; if you are seen acting in this manner, the gospel, by whose operation it is that you are constrained and enabled to show forth such truly and minutely appropriate characters of excellence, will commend itself to the respect and esteem of those who would otherwise have accused it of moral inefficiency, and who would have made your misconduct the handle for traducing and rejecting it. In this way, then, be entreated to labor, that "the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed."

3. In the third place, we exhort you to make a willing sacrifice even of certain privileges and comforts, when the exigencies of the case require it, though, in ordinary circumstances, you would be warranted in refusing to make it if it were demanded. "Let as many servants as are under the yoke," says the apostle, "count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed." It was a common allegation at the commencement of

Christianity, that it loosened the bonds of civil life, and relieved those who embraced it from obligations, which are essential to the existence and welfare of society. And, perhaps, the conduct of some individuals, proceeding from ignorance, or from selfishness, might give some color and plausibility to this charge. Now the apostle sets himself here, as in other parts of his writings, to remove this cause of stumbling and offence, by urging Christians not only to be faithful in the duties of their calling, but even to forego advantages which they might justly claim, in order that the credit of the gospel might not suffer at their hands. At the period referred to, servants were universally in a state of slavery, they were "under the yoke" as it is here expressed. This was a violation of the natural and essential rights of man; and implies a dominion which no individual of our species is entitled to exercise over another. But those who suffered from such an outrage, were not probably aware of the radical injustice and monstrous evil to which they were thereby subjected. When the gospel, however, was revealed to them—enlightening them as to the true value and dignity of the human soul—breathing a spirit of equity and love—and inculcating maxims which were incompatible with the bondage of a single rational being—they felt the desire of liberty spring up in their bosoms, and they were tempted to gratify it, by abandoning the servitude to which they had hitherto submitted. And in doing so, they would have acted agreeably to the impulse of nature, to the dictates of reason, to the pervading tone and general principles of Christianity. But then if Christianity was true, as they believed it to be, and if it was of infinite importance, as they professed to regard it, their personal immunities and comforts should not be put in competition with its interests and prosperity, and prevalence in the world. And, therefore, as they happened to be "under the yoke," and as any violent attempt to gain their freedom would be employed to the prejudice of

the gospel, and might increase the opposition, already so formidable, to its progress and establishment, the apostle counselled them to continue as they were; and though their masters were holding them in slavery, and moreover had not been privileged to know and to believe "the truth as it is in Jesus," but were still involved in ignorance and error, and in the sight of God far below the level of those over whom they tyrannised, yet "to count them worthy of all honor," to obey them as heretofore, to execute all their lawful commands, and to do nothing that could give unnecessary offence.

Now, my friends, you see from this what is incumbent on you all. It is of no consequence whether you be masters or servants, whether you stand in one relation or in another. The principle here illustrated comprehends the whole. While you recollect what is due to yourselves, you must recollect still more what is due to the gospel. Think well of its truth, of its value, of its influence on human happiness, of its necessity to man's salvation, of the enmity it has to encounter, of the obligations you are under to support it, of the encouragements you have to do much and to endure much for its prosperity. Think of these things, and you will not marvel at the exhortation given by the apostle to those servants who were "under the yoke;" and you will not resist the exhortation as addressed to you in that application of its meaning, which is called for by your several and peculiar circumstances. Which of you does not acknowledge himself bound by every strong and endearing tie, to labor for the furtherance of the gospel? Which of you can hesitate, for this purpose, to cultivate those moral virtues, which, in consequence of their being prescribed by the divine law, must be practised, independently of their effects on the belief and obedience of others? And which of you can, consistently with his Christian privileges, his Christian profession, his Christian experience, refuse to lay his all, when the cause of the gospel requires

it, at the foot of the cross, and there consecrate it to the honor of that holy name by which he is called, and to the support of that blessed doctrine which maketh "wise unto salvation?" If the apostle went so far as to exhort those who were "under the yoke" to continue without murmuring, to drink the bitter cup of slavery, surely we do not go too far when we insist upon your exercising all those acts of self-denial, and offering all those sacrifices, which can possibly be exacted from Christians in these lands, and in these days, for the sake of their religion. And the effect of such generous conduct cannot fail to be most beneficial, in "putting to silence the ignorance of those foolish men," who, because they can speak of you as evil-doers, would speak also of Christianity as consistent with evil-doing. It is well when they see you discharging faithfully and diligently those duties which are taught and enjoined in the moral law, or which are specified in the preceptive part of the gospel. But it is better still, when they see you taking a higher and more liberal aim; and far from standing on rights which human authority would vindicate for you, and which the common feelings and understanding of mankind would justify you in seeking and asserting, ready to surrender them with cheerfulness, when, but for this surrender, the credit of religion would be brought into suspicion, and its success arrested, or its influence impaired. When they see you thus disinterested, and thus munificent, in your contendings for its prosperity, they not only believe you to be sincere in the attachment which you profess to feel for it, but they perceive it to be a powerful and efficacious instrument for subduing all the selfish passions of our nature, for raising men to degrees of virtue and of righteousness which cannot be reached under the direction and energy of ordinary motives, and for forming them to the love and the pursuit of those excellencies which are equally ornamental to the individuals by whom they are culti-

vated, and useful to the society whose character and whose interests they are calculated to affect. So that unless their hatred towards the gospel is unquenchable and unless they are determined to show their hostility to it in spite of the most powerful recommendations by which it can be pressed upon their regard, they will not only treat it with forbearance—they will not only refrain from blaspheming or speaking evil of it, and laboring in that way to counteract its influence and its progress in the world, but they may also be led to think of it with secret reverence, to inquire into the more direct and conclusive evidences of its divinity, and to deal with it in such a manner, as to give fair promise of becoming, through God's blessing, believers in its doctrine, subjects of its power, and promoters of its universal propagation.

I should now proceed to exhort you, in the fourth place, to live habitually under the influence of those great and peculiar principles which you have embraced as Christians, and which are both intended and fitted to produce sanctifying effects in more than on ordinary measure. But this particular, and some others, I must reserve as the subject of another discourse.

Let me now conclude with reminding you, that though you are to labor and to sacrifice much, in order that "the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed," this must not be regarded as the sole, nor even the chief, motive for your holy walk and conversation. Such an idea would produce simulation and hypocrisy—an effect which would not only render all your exertions useless as to yourselves, but, on being detected, would defeat the object you had in view, and increase the enmity, and add to the triumphs of the adversaries of the gospel. Study to be Christians in heart and in reality. Live in the faith of Jesus, in dependance on his righteousness, and in obedience to his will, whether men see you or not. Labor to

approve yourselves to God, and to prepare for immortality. And think only of the good and of the evil which your conduct is capable of producing on the fortunes of Christianity, that you may have one motive more, and that a most interesting and efficacious motive, for determining you, to deny yourselves to every species, and every degree, and every appearance, of sinful indulgence, and for exciting you to strive to be righteous before God and before men, "walking in all the commandments, and in all the ordinances of the Lord blameless."

SERMON XII.

THE DUTY OF CHRISTIANS IN REFERENCE TO THE OBJECTION FOUNDED UPON THEIR IMPERFECTIONS.

1 TIMOTHY vi. 1.

"*Let as many servants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, that the name of God and his doctrine be not blasphemed.*"

After showing you, at considerable length, that the misconduct of professing Christians forms no valid objection to the gospel itself, we remarked that this should not make us indifferent to the objection, or treat it as if it were of no moment, and possessed no influence. On the contrary, we should be anxious to meet the objection, by removing the ground upon which it is made to rest,—to do every thing which can uphold the credit of our religion, and to do nothing of which advantage may be taken to gainsay or to disparage it. It is not enough that we demonstrate, however clearly and convincingly, the unfairness of the attack which is made upon it by its adversaries; we should, moreover, strive to wrest from them the very weapons which they employ for its injury or its destruction, and to give not the

least color or appearance of justice to the hostility with which they assail it. We are called upon by every motive of gratitude to the Saviour, of regard to the divine honor, and of compassion to the souls of men, who must be saved by Christianity or not be saved at all, to abstain from all those actions and indulgences by which, the "name or the doctrine of God may be blasphemed." This is the exhortation of the apostle; and we proposed to illustrate it, by pointing out the way in which it is to be complied with, so as most effectually to answer the end for which it is given. And, in prosecution of this object, we observed, in the first place, that amidst all your regards for the gospel, you should never forget, that it is a practical system, designed to produce in you a conformity to the moral law, and a resemblance to the moral image of God. By steadily regarding it in this light, you will give it an authority over every part of your conduct, and effectually discomfit the enemies of the gospel, who will find it impossible, from any thing they observe in you, to "blaspheme the name or the doctrine of God."

In the second place, we remarked, that you should apply yourselves to a faithful and conscientious discharge of the peculiar duties which belong to the several relations in which you stand, and to the various circumstances in which you are placed. You must not merely be holy in general, but you must be holy in your particular calling, connexion, or condition; as masters or as servants, as parents or as children, as rulers or as subjects, in poverty or in riches, in prosperity or in adversity, in health or in sickness. In this way you are to recommend the gospel, by displaying its practical worth and beneficial moral tendency, by demonstrating that it is not a scheme of speculative opinions and of barren faith, but a system of substantial purity and genuine excellence, accommodated to man with the constitution of which he is possessed, and in all the situations in which he can be placed. Thus

also, are you to labor that "the name and the doctrine of God be not blasphemed."

We remarked, in the third place, as more particularly suggested by the text, that you must make a willing sacrifice, even of certain privileges and comforts, when the exigencies of the case require it, though, in ordinary circumstances, you would be warranted in refusing such a sacrifice, if it were demanded. Such generous and disinterested conduct must have the effect, not only of removing prejudices against the gospel, but of producing a positive impression in its favor, by showing that Christians, while they strive to submit to its practical authority in every thing, are also willing to yield this submission at the expense of many things which in justice they might successfully claim, and innocently enjoy. In this way, then, are we to be instrumental in preventing "the name of God and his doctrine from being blasphemed."

4. I would now, in the fourth place, exhort you to live with a habitual reverence to those great and peculiar principles by which Christianity is distinguished and characterised.

Your conduct, indeed, must be more or less influenced by these principles, or you would not, properly speaking, be Christians at all. You might do many things which are in the letter agreeable to God's law, and avoid many things which that law, in its letter, forbids; and your character might exhibit what the outward observer would pronounce to be holy. But still, unless all that you thus did and manifested, proceeded from those considerations which are peculiar to the gospel, it would not amount to the holiness which that dispensation is intended to produce in its votaries. By Christian principles, then, you must, if Christians, be habitually actuated and governed.

But the counsel I would offer you, is that the proper principles of the gospel be fondly cherished by you—*be kept* constantly present to your minds—and be *appealed* and yielded to at every step of your pilgrimage.

must not be contented with having merely em-
l them—with giving them the homage of your
standing and your heart when they become the
:ts of your converse or meditation—with defend-
em from the attacks of those who would regard
as unscriptural and irrational—or with drawing
them the blessings of hope and consolation.
must exercise a perpetual mastery over your de-
and your doings. Every suggestion which they
must be received. Every action to which they
ɔt, must be performed. Every restraint which
impose, must be submitted to. Every sacrifice
i they dictate, must be made. And your thoughts
ɔe so intensely directed to them, and you must be so
singly conscious of their operation, and you must
such an abiding sense of their excellence and im-
ıce, that wherever you are, and in whatever you
ngaged, you will experience their animating, or
controlling power.
u may be well acquainted with the whole range
ral duty, and may be able to say at once what it
rehends and what it excludes, and to adduce
elical reasons, for doing the one, and not doing
her—and all this may produce in you a great de-
ɔf self-denial, and righteousness, and respectability.
till we have to desiderate the unremitting applica-
f Christian principles, which will not only serve to
you holy as it were by instinct, but will impart
ergy and an unction to your holiness, and render
more substantial, far more perfect, and far more
tive. We not merely desire to see a real con-
n subsisting between those principles and that
ɔss; but we desire to see, moreover, such a cher-
consciousness of that connexion, as that the for-
may be sending forth incessantly their strongest
nces upon the latter, and pervade every depart-
, and regulate every action of the life.
t us illustrate this view of the subject by a few
ples. If the victim of poverty present himself

before you, and supplicate your aid, you know it to be an incumbent duty to relieve him if you can: and though you had nothing to guide or govern you but a scripture precept, you would, in obedience to it, perform the good work. But would not you perform it more readily, and more cheerfully, if you remembered "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, who, though he was rich, for your sakes became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be made rich?" And would not your heart glow with a warmer sympathy still, and would not your alms be more liberal, and would not a greater tenderness breathe throughout your words of compassion, if you felt, as well as remembered, the grace of the Redeemer, if you realized Him in all the depth of his condescension, and in all the fulness of his mercy, and if at the moment when your charity was implored for a suffering fellow-creature, your heart had dwelling in it, and working in it, the faith, and the love, and the admiration of a suffering Saviour?

Again, suppose you are tempted to indulge in something which wears the aspect of sinfulness, but not so decidedly as at once to alarm and deter you: it would not be difficult for you to find in your store of scriptural maxims, and in your general convictions of right and wrong, sufficient reason for abstaining from it. But had you to seek for these, and were you left to form a judgment after deliberate and lengthened consideration, the temptation might have subdued you, before you had come to a decision, or at least your preservation might not have been secured without a dangerous struggle. On the other hand, had you been in the habit of contemplating the cross of Christ, of beholding in it the exceeding turpitude of sin, which required his death to expiate it, of considering yourselves as bought with the price of his precious blood—then the case would not have admitted of a moment's hesitation; your conscience would have been tender; you could not have borne the thought of "crucifying the Lord afresh;" and you would have retreated from the very risk of sinning, and

from the very "appearance of evil," more than, on other principles, you would have done from a visible and unequivocal transgression.

Again, were there some course of duty set before you, accompanied with difficulty, and danger, and distress, acting as Christians you would doubtless enter upon it, and persevere in it, and finish it. But there would be little liveliness and little vigor in your exertions, while you took merely a distant or a desultory view of the motives which should stimulate and urge you on. If, on the contrary, your minds were previously familiar with those truths in the history of redemption which must powerfully affect the springs of moral action—if you nourished in your bosom the idea of God's redeeming love, manifested in the mission and the sacrifice of his own Son—if you were accustomed to look up to him as propitiated, and reconciled, and invested with all the benignity and affection of a parent—if a sense of the endearing obligation thus laid upon you, were matter, not of occasional, but of daily, hourly unceasing experience—in that case, with what alacrity would you undertake the duties required of you! how delighted would you be to have them as the means of testifying your gratitude and devotedness to the author of your mercies! what zeal, what fidelity, what activity, what constancy would you display in the performance of them! and how patiently would you endure all the sufferings you had to bear! and how resolutely would you struggle with all the obstacles that opposed your progress in the paths of righteousness!

Now, if a habitual reference to the peculiar principles of the gospel be calculated to produce such a holy effect, it must tend directly and greatly to aid the object of the apostle's exhortation. It will do so in a twofold way. First, it will secure a far greater degree of excellence in the character of Christians. There will be a more decided resistance to temptation, and a more scrupulous and careful abstinence from every thing that partakes of moral delinquency. There will be a more conscien-

tious, and more active, and more assiduous cultivation of every public and every private virtue. There will be a higher tone of feeling, and a higher style of acting, than are usually exhibited, even among those who are admired and commended for their personal worth. And thus, not only will there be an absence of those offensive qualities—those unbecoming tempers—those unworthy practices which, when they appear in professing Christians, cause "the name and the doctrine of God to be blasphemed," but there will be a display of those positive excellencies—those beauties of holiness, which even the wicked regard with some portion of reverence and esteem, and which forbid them to speak, or to think, evil of that system with which they are associated. And, secondly, there is a more intimate connexion established between Christianity and Christians, in the judgment of those who witness their conduct. If Christians refer to the gospel, merely as a system of morals, they are not doing it justice; and though they should succeed in protecting it, in that character, from the reproach, or even in recommending it to the adoption, of those who have hitherto opposed it, they would not thereby act fully up to their obligations; for in that limited character, it is not the gospel as proceeding from the wisdom and the grace of God. But when they are seen adorned with the manifold attributes of moral virtue—with all that is pure, and lovely, and of good report; when they can appeal to the peculiar principles of Christianity, as the source from which such distinctions proceed; and when the relation of the one to the other is made apparent and undeniable, then, not only are the mouths of gainsayers stopped, but they are taught to admire Christianity as a system of sanctifying truth, as well as a system of practical duty, and viewing it as calculated, by its peculiar nature, to renovate, to purify, to ennoble, frail and fallen man, they may, by the divine blessing, be constrained to exchange the language of blasphemy for the accents of praise, and to give glory to God's name

which is holy, and to believe in his doctrine which is "a doctrine according to godliness," because it is a doctrine of free and saving grace.

5. In the fifth place, I would exhort you to be much given to the exercise of prayer.

I take it for granted that you do not neglect this duty, because, if you neglect it, you are not the real disciples of Jesus. There may be a professor of Christianity, but there is no sincere or real Christian, who is a stranger to prayer—who is destitute of its spirit, or by whom it is practically disregarded. This is evident, both from its own nature and from the manner in which it is commanded and enforced; and experience, as well as scripture, demonstrates the necessity of its forming a regular and constituent part of a religious life.

But, if you have seriously attended to the connexion which subsists between prayer and practice, and to what you yourselves must have felt and observed in reference to it, you cannot but be aware, that many of the defects by which your practice has been marked, have arisen from your remissness in the duty of prayer; that the less intercourse of this kind you held with your heavenly Father, the more apt have you been to listen to the voice of temptation, and to be overcome by it; that it was often by forgetting to go to the throne of grace, and to supplicate there the wisdom, and the strength, and the blessing which you needed, that you were overtaken in those faults which have wounded your own conscience, and given occasion to the enemies of religion to blaspheme; that, in short, had there been more devotion, there would have been more purity of mind, more vigilance against the snares of the world, more strenuous endeavors to maintain a conscience and a conduct void of offence, more actual and abundant attainments in Christian holiness.

Nor is it difficult to see how a failure in the one should be necessarily productive of failures in the other department of your Christian calling. Prayer is en-

joined as plainly, and as peremptorily, as any moral virtue which you are called to practise. It is pressed upon you by similar obligations; it is recommended by similar motives; it issues in similar results. It is as necessary as the other, to form the aggregate of your obedience to God's will upon earth, and of your preparation for his presence in heaven. And this being the case, you cannot be remiss in it, or forgetful of it, without violating what you owe to him, as your Lord and King. But withholding submission to him in one thing, naturally leads to withholding submission to him in another. The claim of his high authority, or of his redeeming love being once deliberately resisted, you become a more easy prey to sinful allurements, though they beset you in a different quarter, and lead you to partake of a different indulgence. If you do not pray, though God commands you, and beseeches you to do so, what is there to restrain you from transgression in something else, if you be tempted to it, where there is no other barrier, or no barrier more impassable than that which you have already violated—the commandment and the entreaty of a great and merciful God. Be assured, my friends, that all the principles, and all the practices of moral obedience, or of spiritual submission to the divine will, are so intimately and closely linked together, that you cannot dispense with one of them without being thereby more easily persuaded to surrender another. The whole is a sacred and connected territory, and if you allow the tempter to invade and to establish himself in any corner of it, you facilitate his conquest of any position he may choose to attack, or wish to occupy. Prayer is as much a duty as any thing else that is required of you in the law of God; and to neglect it, implies a disregard of those principles and motives which secure the performance of every other duty, and therefore prepares the way for neglecting any observance which interferes with our worldly interest or worldly pleasure.

But farther, prayer is an instituted means of becoming, and continuing, holy. You cannot keep yourselves from sin, or secure your progress in the paths of righteousness, by any resources of your own. This is one melancholy feature of your fallen state—declared in the scriptures of truth, and evinced in every man's personal history. And we have reason to bless God, that while the gospel acknowledges the fact, the gospel also makes suitable provision for remedying the evil which it implies. It promises to supply the want by imparting the strength that is needed. It points out the source from which the requisite aid is to be derived. And it distinctly intimates that prayer is the instrument by which you are to apply for it, and the medium through which you are to obtain it. Now, if in this point you be careless and negligent, what can be the result, but a proportional declension in the ways of holiness? If the appointed means be not adequately employed, how can you expect to secure the end which is offered only on these terms? And I do not merely, in this view, insist on the necessity of general supplication, as if that were sufficient—as if it were quite enough to be sensible of general weakness in the spiritual frame, and to offer up a general petition for the communication of corresponding strength. It is probably from this mode of indulging in generalities on the subject, that, even where individuals are regular, and frequent, and fervent in their devotions, there is so much backsliding, and so little progress. If you have a particular duty to perform, and yet do not ask grace, and direction, and help, in reference to that particular duty, no wonder that there is a failure in the degree of purity and perfection with which you discharge it. And, if you be tempted to any particular sin, and yet do not implore appropriate guidance and aid, so that you may be enabled to avoid that particular sin, it cannot be greatly marvelled at, that you should be betrayed into the commission of it. In this manner, neglect of prayer, or an undue observance of it, as a means or-

dained by Him, to whom it is addressed, for guarding us against transgression, and carrying on the process of sanctification with vigor and success, must be attended with many of those moral failings and aberrations which bring disrepute on our religion, as well as impair the character, and disturb the peace, of those who are guilty of them.

There is still another consideration illustrative of this point which deserves attention. A life of prayer is calculated, in its own nature, to purify the heart and elevate the character. In the course of that life you spend much time in communion with that Being who is "glorious in holiness"—in contemplating his perfections, which are all in league against sin—in referring to his will which has declared itself "against all unrighteousness, and ungodliness of men"—in appealing to that revelation of his mercy in the gospel, which so illustrates his hatred of iniquity, and his love of moral excellence, in the scheme which it unfolds for your deliverance from the one and your restoration to the other. And in coming from your devotional intercourse with God, you come as it were from heaven, where all that you have seen, and all that you have learned, and all that you have felt, is holy; where the atmosphere which you breathed is purity itself; and where you were furnished with the spirit that shall lift you above the corruptions of the world, and animate you to the cultivation of all that is virtuous and good. But if you allow yourselves to be perpetually, or disproportionately, occupied with worldly things, with sensible objects, with common duties, detached from the influence and the exercises of devotion—if you be maintaining much converse with the creature, of whom imperfection and sin are characteristic, and little with the Creator, whose nature, and character, and purposes, and plans, are all distinguished by unspotted purity and rectitude—it cannot fail to happen that your conduct will partake of the qualities of that to which you have given such an undue

preference, that there will not be such a scrupulous and determined resistance to the allurements of sin, as more devotional habits would have secured, that there will not be the same relish for high attainments in virtue, and the same eager and animated efforts to become "holy even as God himself is holy," that there will be more of those short-comings and trespasses which give a handle to the blasphemer, and fewer of those amiable graces, and unequivocal excellencies, of deportment, which might have checked his blasphemy, or converted it into praise.

We exhort you, therefore, in whatever situation you are, and whatever be the advances you have made in your Christian course, to be "instant in prayer,"—to "pray without ceasing,"—"in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving to make your requests known unto God." This will help to purify all the springs of conduct—to elevate your views and affections above every thing base and polluted. It will procure for you from on high "the whole armor of God," by which you will be protected from the assaults of temptation, and enabled to subdue the enemies that would drive or seduce you from the ways of righteousness. And thus, by its indirect influence, and the divine help which it procures, it will enable you to act habitually, so that through you "the name of God, and his doctrine shall not be blasphemed."

6. In the last place, we exhort you to live habitually under the powers of the world to come.

So much and so intimately are we connected with this world, that nothing can deliver us from it, or lift us above it, but the faith which carries our views into a future world, and brings before us its great and momentous realities. And it uniformly happens, that in proportion as we neglect to give our faith that direction, or rest satisfied with a feeble or a partial exercise of it, in that proportion do we languish in our Christian efforts, and allow sin to regain its ascendancy over us.

Every one of us must have observed this in the case of others. Every one must have experienced it in his own case. It arises from the very nature and circumstances of human beings. And though the believer is rescued from the dominion of iniquity, and of this present evil world, yet it is a part of the salvation wrought out for him, that his views are directed to eternity; and his conduct will, in a great measure, depend on the frequency and the intensity with which he looks forward to it, and on the submissiveness with which he yielded to that practical influence which it is fitted to exert upon his whole deportment. Of the numerous instances, in which you have indulged in forbidden gratification, or transgressed the rule of duty, there are not a few, I am confident, in which were you asked, why you thus sinned, you would answer, because, for the time, you had banished futurity from your view, and did not think, as you ought to have thought, of the strict account you have to render, and of the everlasting destiny which awaits you.

Let me, then, entreat you to retain, and to cherish in your minds, a settled impression of eternity. Remember that you have to undergo a great change, and to encounter a solemn reckoning at the tribunal of a righteous and heart-searching Judge. Remember that you have to answer for "the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad." Remember that your responsibility embraces not only your conduct considered in itself, but also as it affects the conduct and the fate of your fellow-men, and the interests of the gospel in a present state. And let these things awaken in you a solemn concern, not merely that you may be prepared by a life of faith, and piety, and holiness, for the great scene that lies before you, but that you may abstain from even the slightest transgression which would either lay a stumbling-block in the way of a Christian brother, or prove a ground of offence and of blaspheming to "them that are without." Think of the hell

ich awaits the wicked, that you may see what "an
l and a bitter thing it is to sin against God," since it
ls him to condemn many of his rational creatures
ɔ have committed it, and have not had it washed
ıy, to unspeakable and never-ending misery; and
ing that the ways and the issue of it are death, that
ı may tremble at his word, and keep yourselves from
abominable thing which he hates with so perfect a
red. Think of the heaven, into which they, that
'e turned unto the Lord, and have walked in the
ys of his commandments, are finally introduced,
t from the contemplation of all the holiness and hap-
ess which it presents to the believer's eye, you may
ive that divine influence which shall reach into your
ırt, and pervade all your actions, and hedge you in to
path of cheerful and devoted obedience, and lead
ı to "purify yourselves even as God himself is
e." Think of the shortness and the uncertainty of
, of which not merely every passing year, but every
sing day, affords you the most striking proofs, that
ı may not be tempted to lose one opportunity that is
ırded you for performing the work of righteousness
hat you may be determined to redeem the time
ich you have already wasted, that you may not
nd one moment more in forbidden indulgence—
t, neither in word nor in deed, you may be the
asion of exposing the doctrine of God to ridicule
reproach—that you may justify your highest pro-
ıion by the purest practice, and "let your light so
ıe before men, that they may see your good works,
l glorify your Father which is in heaven." And,
brethren, living thus by faith in the Son of God,
ısecrating yourselves to that service of His in which
and Satan have no share, and contributing to the
ıusion and the establishment of the gospel of salva-
ı, every coming day, as it arrives, will find you
dy for your departure, because it will find you walk-
as the redeemed and the sanctified of the Lord;—

and whether you be servants or masters, rich or poo
young or old, mighty or mean, yet, having "kept t
faith," and "finished your course," and proved
blessing to many that were ignorant and perishin
death, be it lingering or be it sudden, shall only r
move you from a scene that is restless and pollute
to that land of purity and of bliss, where "they th
are wise shall shine as the firmament, and they th
have turned many to righteousness, as the stars forev
and ever."

SERMON XIII.*

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER.

MATTHEW vii. 7.

"*Ask, and it shall be given you.*"

have frequently addressed you on the subject of
er; but in the present discourse we propose merely
ustrate some of the encouragements that are afford-
ɔr engaging in this exercise.
od commands us to pray to him; not leaving it to
ɔwn discretion whether we shall pray or not—but
ively and expressly enjoining the duty as requisite,
lly as an act of homage due to himself, and as the
ıs of securing our own welfare. But though con-
ɔd that we must pray, if we would render obedience
ıe divine authority, and promote the safety and
being of our souls, still there are various consider-
s to which it is expedient to attend, and under
ıe constraining influence it is necessary to act, in
r that we may engage in that exercise freely,
rfully, and confidently—that we may enjoy all the

reached in St. George's Church, Edinburgh, on Sabbath, 7th No-
ır, 1830, before the celebration of the Lord's Supper.

satisfaction and pleasure with which it ought to be accompanied—and that we may completely surmount those hindrances and interruptions, which not only tend to distress the young and inexperienced Christian, but even have the effect of occasionally impairing the devotion of those who are most confirmed in the ways of piety. It is to the considerations in question that we mean at present to direct your thoughts, in the hope that they may contribute to your improvement in a most important branch of the Christian character, and that they may derive both illustration and force from the solemn service in which we are this day to be more immediately engaged.

I. In the first place, let it be remembered, that the God to whom you pray is as willing and ready, as he is able, to bestow upon you the blessings that you need and ask.

Of his power to answer your prayers, it is impossible for you to doubt. He is absolute proprietor of the universe. Every thing in it, material and immaterial, is at his sovereign disposal. And he can give it in the measure, and in the mode, and in the season, that seem good in his sight. All this your minds admit, without the least hesitation. But whether he may be pleased to exert his omnipotence in communicating what you entreat of him, is a different question. And when you think of the separation which sin has made between you and him; when you look to him as a holy, and a just, and a jealous God; and when you think of the demerit which he sees in your character, and of the provocations by which you have awakened his displeasure, and given him reason to send you a curse instead of a blessing—it is not unnatural for you to feel as if he would turn a deaf ear to your supplications, and to ask a supply to your wants, if you ask it at all, with the chilling apprehension that it will either be wholly refused, or granted with a frown.

Now, let me assure you, my believing friends, that all such ideas are groundless and unworthy—that they

proceed from most mistaken views of that Being to whom your prayers are addressed—and that whenever they intrude into your minds, they ought to be instantly banished, as not less dishonorable to God, than they are injurious to your own comfort. For,

First, The very circumstance of God's commanding you to pray, implies in it an assurance that he will listen to your prayer. You cannot suppose, that, in enjoining upon you such an application to him, he is mocking and trifling with you, making an empty display of his authority, and sporting with your feelings, and your expectations, and your necessities. The inconsistency which this supposition involves may be displayed by sinful and capricious man; but it can have no place in the dealings of God with his creatures. There is an untainted honor, and there is a perfect consistency, in all his doings, which forbid the very thought. In that general attribute of goodness, and more especially in that particular exercise of it which is denominated mercy, and which is ascribed to him in his treatment of the destitute and the miserable, you might discover something like a ground which would warrant you to hope that your prayers will be heard and answered. But when you recollect, that, besides this, he actually holds out his mercy as that for whose communications you not only may, but must in duty, beseech him, the ground of hope assumes a broader aspect—a more sure and stable form. You cannot but be sensible, that, in the very language in which he bids you ask of him what you need, he pledges himself to give it without fail, and without reluctance. And this pledge is as extensive as is the commandment,—reaching, therefore, throughout the whole range of your wants, and embracing in it every individual benefit that is necessary to your happiness. When he requires you to ask, he does not limit you to one or more of the good things which are indispensable to the improvement of your character, or to the fulness of your joy. His requisition includes them all; and, consequently, you may be

satisfied—for it cannot be otherwise—that he is ready to bestow them all.

2. But God does not leave you to any thing like mere inference on this point: and I have drawn your attention to the consideration now stated, chiefly for the purpose of showing you, that even from the sterner view in which God presents himself to his people,—that of a lawgiver and a ruler,—they may draw encouragement to pray in the spirit of liberty. He does not, I say, leave you to any thing like mere inference on this point. He condescends to make explicit declarations of his willingness to fulfil the desires and petitions of your hearts, and he expresses this willingness in the language of unequivocal promise—of distinct and positive assurance. Of this you meet with multiplied and satisfying proofs in his holy word. His word, indeed, may be justly said to be one continued proof of it. For while there are many passages in which prayer and promise are explicitly conjoined, every instance in which God intimates his readiness to give blessings to his people, though it be not expressly connected with prayer, is to be regarded as having the same meaning as if it were; because it is the doctrine of scripture, and what no Christian can forget, that every blessing he receives, presupposes prayer as the appointed means of obtaining it. Well, therefore, may we assert, that the Bible is full of divine testimony to this statement that God's ear is ever open to your cry, and that his hand is ever ready to convey to you the blessings that you need and solicit.

And, if I must quote any particular part of the sacred volume to illustrate the reality and the extent of God's willingness to answer prayer, I would remind you of these words, (Matt. xxi. 22.) "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." These are words addressed to you from heaven, by the mouth of Him, who is appointed to reveal to you the mercy and the will of God, and in whom you have placed your confidence as "the faithful and true wit-

ness." They proclaim, in emphatic terms, the absolute certainty of your receiving from him, to whom you direct your prayer, the things that you ask. And they are of the most generous and comprehensive import, as to the number and variety of those blessings which you are entitled to supplicate, or may expect to obtain. Not that you can either ask, or look for, any thing that fancy, or caprice, or ignorance, or corrupt inclination may dictate or suggest. Such things are, in the very nature of the case, excluded. Whatever you ask must be that which God warrants or permits you to ask, as being directly conducive or really necessary to your attainment of that salvation and that felicity to which he teaches you to aspire. But there is no moral quality, no spiritual comfort, no possession of any kind, which comes within that description, that you may not ask; nay, that you ought not to ask. And if you ask it, the petition finds a response in the mind of that compassionate Being who "giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not," and will infallibly secure for you, sooner or later, in its suitable degree, and as to all its proper effect, the particular benefit, whatever it is, for which you have applied. God himself tells you this; and it argues an unbelieving heart, when you allow any suspicion to arise within you that he will not fulfil what he has so graciously promised. His willingness is so strongly proclaimed, and so frequently repeated, and so closely associated with all that is true and holy in his character, that you should feel as much assured of it, as if you already possessed and enjoyed the mercies which as yet you have only implored—agreeably to the statement of the apostle John; "This is the confidence that we have in him, that if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us; and if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

There is another declaration made by our Lord in his valedictory discourse, which very strikingly illustrates the same truth, (John xvi. 26, 27.) "At that

day, ye shall ask in my name; and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you; for the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God."—"I say not unto you, I will pray the Father for you"—as if my intercession were necessary to extort from God, what he is otherwise reluctant to give, or determined to withhold. He has, indeed, appointed that intercession as a constituent part of the scheme by which you are redeemed, and as it will not be forgotten by me, so neither can it be disregarded by you. But it is itself an institution of divine grace. It is an indication of that love of God which prompts him to give you all things pertaining to life and godliness. And being believers in me as having come from him, and having loved me as his Son and your Saviour, you are the objects of his peculiar affection. He loves you as his own by the most endearing tie. He has devised a plan by which he may righteously and richly shower down upon you the most invaluable blessings. And, when I plead your cause with him, and supplicate for you and your need, I address myself to my Father and your Father—one whose thoughts towards you are already thoughts of love, who regards you with overflowing kindness, and will delight in doing you good. You have no reason, therefore, to fear a cold reception, or a stern denial of your requests. Abundant reason have you, on the contrary, to pray without doubting, and without reserve, for whatsoever you stand in need of. "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."—It was thus that our Lord cheered and encouraged his more immediate disciples in the matter of prayer. And the same arguments I am called upon to urge, for the same purpose upon you who, like them, love and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. You are the objects, as were they, of the Father's tender and affectionate regards; and through all the clouds which have risen upon your view, and veiled the throne at which you bend, it is your duty and your privilege to penetrate; to recognise the coun-

tenance of God beaming upon you with ineffable benignity, and to feel animated in spreading out your wants before him, by the interesting fact, that in him there is a well-spring of mercy, from which he will bountifully supply them all.

3. Again, let me turn your attention to some of those representations of himself which God has been pleased to give to his suppliant people, and by which they are encouraged to draw near to him in prayer. For instance, he is represented as seated on a throne of grace. Now, you are never to contemplate God as divested of the attributes of holiness and justice. These are essential to him, and enter into every correct and comprehensive idea of his character. But then, were you to think of him, only as holy to hate the sin which he sees in you, and just to visit it with merited punishment, all approach to him would be felt to be presumption, and all supplication would appear to be vain. He therefore, reveals himself to you as occupying a throne of grace—thus assuring you of his favor, and inviting you to come to him without dread and without misgiving. He sits upon "a throne, high and lifted up," with every thing at his command, and controlled by no created power in the communication of his gifts. He is holy and just, indeed; but his holiness has been so honored, and his justice so satisfied, that they form no hinderance to the operation of his grace—which is free to expatiate upon all the objects of his regard, to the full extent of their necessities. This grace is so abundant in its riches, so liberal in its outgivings, so unchecked and unrestricted in the generosity of its designs, and so accessible to all who need its interposition and its aid, that it is mentioned as characteristic of his throne; as not merely something by which it is distinguished in common with other properties of a different kind, but as having such a prominence and such an ascendancy that all other properties are subordinated by it and absorbed in it, as the quality, in short, that gives the name by which God's throne is spoken of,

and by which it is consecrated in the estimation of all his worshipping people. It is not the throne of majesty—it is not the throne of vengeance—it is not the throne of holiness and justice. It is the throne of grace—He who sits upon it is the God of grace—the invitation that issues from it is the invitation of grace—the blessings that it holds out are the blessings of grace. This is the throne, my believing friends, that you go to—that you bow before—that you address, when you ask what you need. And why does God speak of himself as occupying such a throne, if it be not to impress you with the persuasion, that so far from turning away your prayers from him, you cannot be more desirous to receive, than he is willing to bestow? Let your wants be what they may; let them be so great that you cannot calculate them, so numerous that you cannot reckon them, so urgent that you are ready to sink under them—let them be what they may,—there is in that one word "grace," which designates the throne where you are to implore relief, what may satisfy you that there is not only a sufficiency wherewith to supply them all, but a decided and an unreserved readiness to minister to them all. Even let it be supposed that your conscience has been writing the bitterest things against you—that your transgressions appear to you in the most aggravated colors—that you feel your heart hard and insensible as a rock—that a conviction of utter unworthiness has taken possession of your soul—and that you are afraid to look to God, or to ask from him the pardon, the sanctification, the comfort, of which you are as undeserving as you are needful—still I must exhort you to have recourse to his throne, and to take encouragement from this, that it is "the throne of grace." The righteous Lord sits upon that throne; but his face has no frown upon it—his voice has no terror in it. On whatever part of that throne you cast your eye, you see it inscribed with grace in all its variety of application to your circumstances. There is grace to blot out your trespasses, though they be "red like crim-

There is grace to purify your hearts, though be full of all uncleanness. There is grace to sub- rour enemies, though they "come upon you as a ." There is grace to console you amidst all your ws, though they be great and, multiplied, and acted. There is grace to guide you through life, eer you at death, and to carry you to heaven. as surely as God sits upon that throne of grace, so y will he listen to the prayers that you prefer at otstool, and uphold the character which he himself nstamped upon it, by freely tendering and impart- you whatsoever you ask in sincerity and faith. hile God represents himself as seated on a throne ace, he also represents himself under the endear- haracter of a Father. He is a Father, indeed, n you have offended by apostacy and disobedience; is anger has been turned away, reconciliation has effected; and he has sent forth the "Spirit of tion" unto your hearts, whereby you can look up n and say, "Abba, Father." And viewing him nding in this paternal relation, you cannot but feel nced that he will give you what you ask, as "his ren by faith in Jesus Christ." For the leading predominant idea conveyed in that relationship is, ne loves you and will provide for you, and will de- to confer upon you whatever is requisite for your erity and comfort. An affectionate father has it nually, and as an inherent instinct in his heart, to y all the wants of his children; and when they re his help, whether it be to support, or to pro- or to guide, or to console, or to advance them, is no indifference, no aversion, no reluctance in east,—but such a tenderness towards them, such ncern for their safety and well-being, such a desire liver them from evil and to do them good, that st no sacrifice is deemed too costly by which this g may be practically manifested; and even in- tude and undutifulness can scarcely restrain the ficence in which it is disposed to go forth upon its

beloved objects. And "like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Whatever regard an earthly father can be supposed to pay to his helpless and dependent children, may be confidently expected of our heavenly Father, towards those whom he has adopted into the family of the redeemed, and whom he acknowledges as his ransomed offspring. His eye is upon them for good; his ear is open to their cry; his heart longs for opportunities of blessing them; and his readiness to impart to them what they need and ask, has this superiority over the workings of all mere human attachments, that while it will give, even to importunity, nothing that is hurtful or unsuitable, it prompts the petitions for what alone is safe or beneficial, and answers these by the wisest and most liberal communications. Our Saviour appeals to this illustration of God's willingness to answer the requests of his people, when he is urging upon the disciples the duty of prayer—as you find in the verses succeeding our text. "Or what man is there of you"—let him even be more than ordinarily deficient in the affections of kindred—"what man is there of you whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?—or if he ask a fish will he give him a serpent?" Is there any one of you so cruel and so hardened, as either to refuse what his children in duty or from necessity demand of him, or to give them, instead of it, what is useless or injurious? On the contrary, will not his heart yearn towards them with the tenderest sympathy, and will not he be disposed to fulfil, as bountifully as he can, all the desires which they have expressed? "If ye, then, being evil"—with a nature that is imperfect and corrupt, and whose corruption and imperfection must necessarily cleave to all your best affections, and all your worthiest doings—if ye, being thus evil, are inclined and "know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven"—in whom no defect can be conceived to exist, and whose paternal love is too strong to be ever weakened,

nd too rich to be ever exhausted—how much more hall such a Father "give good things to them that ask him!" Such a Father is your Father in Heaven, my believing brethren. And why should not you go to him and make your requests known to him, without any ear of having your suit rejected; or rather with the confidence of obtaining from him what you need and upplicate. Has any thing occurred to discourage you rom drawing near to God in prayer, and asking from im any of the blessings which are yet warrantable subects of petition, and requisite for your welfare? Be ssured that the discouragement has no foundation in ruth, and should have no influence on your minds. Remember that the God whom you thus tremble to approach, and whose mercy you thus distrust, is your Father, and that this is a character which he has assumed, and in which he appears to you, for the very urpose of reviving, establishing, and cherishing your confidence in him. Do not dishonor him by imagining hat he will lay it aside, or act inconsistently with it, in ny part of the intercourse which he maintains with ou, or of the treatment which he gives you, as those hom he has taught to look to him with filial regard. nd, especially, beware of allowing such thoughts to nter your minds, when your circumstances dictate to ou the exercise of that precious privilege, which holds ich an important place amid the various privileges that long to the sons and the daughters of a redeeming od—the privilege of asking from him whatever blessg is accommodated to your need. Rather go with e freedom, and the frankness, and the undoubting fiance of those whom he has called to be his chilen, and whom he therefore invites into his presence, nd assures of an affectionate reception; and spread t all the wants of your condition, and pour out all the sires of your hearts before him—satisfied that he cant but be willing and ready to give you every token of is loving-kindness which your exigencies may require. Whenever any thing happens to keep you away from

him, or to hinder your applications to him, as if "he had forgotten to be gracious, and would be favorable no more," call to mind what you were once enabled to say on the warrant and by the help of his own Spirit, "doubtless thou art our Father;" and on that ground, ask what you will without fear, and without wavering. And let the encouragement which thus arises from remembering God's willingness to hear and answer your requests, be continually present to your mind, and be realized to your feelings, by your habitually prefacing your devotional applications to him with the significant and cheering address, "Our Father which art in Heaven."

4. I have still to mention another proof of God's willingness to bestow the blessing that you need and ask. And this consists in his having given his own Son to save you by his sufferings and his death. It is impossible for us to estimate the value of this gift, or to conceive what love it implied on the part of God from whom it proceeded. But, whether we look to the declarations of scripture respecting it, or attend to its nature and consequences so far as we are capable of comprehending them, its value must be accounted infinite, and we must consider it as bespeaking a love, that "passeth knowledge." Now, my believing friends, you have received the gift: you have been permitted to contemplate, to admire, to experience, its excellence; and you will be ready to confess that, both as to the mercy in which it originated, and the extent and magnitude of its importance to your souls, it is unspeakably and immeasurably great. But acknowledging and feeling this, why should you ever be doubtful of receiving any thing that you ask, in so far as it is essential or conducive to your real welfare? You have already received the greater boon; and can any reason be assigned for your not receiving, with equal certainty and liberality, all the lesser boons? The bestowal of the former intimates a boundless compassion in the Being who imparted it; and when it is the very same Being to whom you apply for every

else, have not you ample security in his boundless
assion for the attainment of the latter? And as
ıe would not be effectual to its purposes, respect-
›ur final salvation, which it was intended to secure,
ut the others being conveyed to you in all their
nted variety and abundance, do you not see that
isdom and the faithfulness, as well as the mercy,
ıd, are pledged, to grant them as constituent parts
own plan of redemption? These considerations
ıfficient, and more than sufficient, to satisfy you
ıe must be perfectly willing to answer your peti-
for every thing connected with your present wel-
ınd your future happiness. The apostle Paul em-
this very argument, when he says, "He that spared
is own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how
he not with him, also, freely give us all things?"
e words represent it as utterly impossible that any
› subordinate blessings should be refused, or should
e conferred with the utmost readiness and gener-
since that has been conferred on which they all
ıd, and which exceeds them all in its intrinsic
ı, and conferred by Him who, in the mission, the
liation, and the sacrifice of his own dear Son, has
led such an overpowering display of love, that it
l be irrational in itself and injurious to his char-
, to harbor even the slightest suspicion of his un-
ıgness to give to his people any one of all the mul-
d comforts and advantages which can enter into
›t, or can contribute to the well-being of a re-
ıed soul. You may be assured, then, that God
ıot, and cannot despise the prayer, which ascends
ım from your hearts; which is offered up in faith,
which refers to benefits that you need and are au-
ıed to ask. Pray for these; and when at any
the apprehension steals in upon you, that they will
›e given, call to mind the ineffable gift of his own
that you may be encouraged to ask; and let your
f in its atoning efficacy, as well as in its inestimable
lousness, give energy and urgency to the requests

that you send up to Heaven. Be assured that that gift is the earnest of every other. He to whose unparalleled bounty you are indebted for it, will give you grace here, and glory hereafter, and will withhold from you nothing that is good. "What is your petition and what is your request?" Present it; and He "will give" you, not only "to the half," but the whole of that salvation which he has provided for you in the gospel. And amidst all your misgivings, and anxieties, and apprehensions, encourage your hearts by remembering these words, "Fear not; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." "Ask, and ye shall receive."

And let the holy ordinance of communion, in which you are now to engage, inspire you with renewed confidence in the exercise of prayer. It is well fitted to do so. For it sets before you that very gift of God which implies, or which brings along with it, all others. At the table of the Lord, you partake of the memorials of that sacrifice by which God makes over to you, who receive them in faith, all the blessings and privileges which you can possibly desire to make you perfectly and forever blessed. And in virtue of your union with Christ and your interest in his finished work, "all things are yours." Why then should you be fearful or backward to ask what is thus your own by covenant-right and by solemn engagement? Over the symbols of Christ's broken body and shed blood, take courage, and plead for whatever your circumstances require. Carry with you the remembrance of his death into all your scenes of devotion, and let it embolden and stimulate you to implore even the richest blessings that are laid up in the storehouse of divine bounty. And with hearts enlarged by the influence of those considerations which we have been pressing on your attention, and guided by the Spirit of all grace, "pray without ceasing," and "in every thing by prayer and supplication, *with* thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto *God*." Bear about with you the promise and the

pledge for its fulfilment, and recal them to your recollection as often as you come before his throne, and especially when doubts and suspicions would fetter your devotion, or keep you at a distance from the Hearer of prayer. "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: for every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened."

EXHORTATION AFTER THE COMMUNION.*

Before we separate, my friends, let me address to you a few exhortations suited to the circumstances in which you now stand, as having been engaged in the solemn duty of commemorating the Saviour's dying love. I shall endeavor to comprise what I have to say within as small a compass as possible. At the same time, you will allow me to address myself, for a little, to the different classes into which, in point of conduct and condition, my hearers may be considered as, on this occasion, divided.

1. In the first place, are there any whose consciences tell them that they have come to the Lord's table, without any fitness for it, and have partaken of the ordinance, without any interest it? that they have been influenced by unworthy motives; that they have been destitute of right principles; that they have acted in an irreverent and unchristian manner? To such of you, I must declare that you have been "guilty of the

* Addressed to the congregation of St. George's Church, Edinburgh, after the celebration of the Lord's Supper, 7th November, 1830.

body and blood of the Lord;" that you have deliberately profaned the memorials of the Saviour's death; that you have been eating and drinking judgment to yourselves—provoking the displeasure, and incurring the condemnation of God. You cannot but be sensible, that the guilt which you have thus contracted is of a highly aggravated nature; and that every consideration which renders the ordinance obligatory, and holy, and endearing, calls upon you to repent of this "your great wickedness." "Repent, therefore, and be converted, that your sin may be blotted out." Humble yourselves before Him whom you have insulted and provoked. Ask of him the forgiveness that you need. Have recourse to the "blood of sprinkling" on which you have trampled, but which alone can cleanse you from iniquity. And let this step be the last of that thoughtless and wayward career which you have been hitherto running. Let the conviction of your guilt arrest you; and, under its awful impression, resolve, in the strength of divine grace, that you will "go and sin no more;" that you will never again touch the symbols of Christ's sacrifice with polluted hands; that you will henceforth live in a state of habitual preparation, and thus be ready whenever providence shall call you, to remember Christ, at his holy table. May God himself teach you to form this resolution, and may he enable you to keep it!

2. In the second place, are there any who, in their communion service, have experienced disappointment; who have sincerely desired, and studiously endeavored, to partake worthily of this ordinance, and yet have not enjoyed the comfort and satisfaction which they expected? Let me entreat such of you not to attribute this to the ordinance itself, as if it were not calculated to impart the consolation which you have sought without finding it; not to impute it to any deficiency of kindness in Him, after whose favor you have been aspiring, though without success; not to consider it as a decisive proof that you have come wholly unprepared

to eat the Lord's supper, and have therefore been guilty of abusing and profaning it. I would rather exhort you to reflect, whether you may not have been looking for more *sensible* communications of divine love than are promised; whether you may not have been waiting for emotions of rapture, when you should have been contented with the humbler, though not less valuable, attainments of moral influence and peaceful enjoyment; whether, imperfect as your service may have been, you are not taking exaggerated views of that imperfection, and mistaking involuntary error for deliberate impiety; whether some worldly care, or some domestic affliction, or some groundless fear, may not have intruded itself, and distracted the tenor of your thoughts, or lowered the tone of your devotion. Reflect whether any of these circumstances may have been the cause of your disappointment. And while you suspect the weakness or the corruption of your own hearts, and are more and more humbled on that account, do not cease to love the ordinance of sacred communion; do not desist from "following on to know the Lord;" do not despair of sooner or later arriving at "everlasting consolation and good hope through grace;" but let your sorrowful experience on this occasion quicken you to greater diligence in the ways of religion; let it teach you to cherish less sanguine expectations of happiness in this mixed and sinful state of being; let it lead you to exercise a profounder submission to the will of your heavenly Father respecting your joys and your griefs, and to rest, not so much upon the frames and feelings of the heart, as upon the sincerity of your desires, the fervor of your prayers, the unwearied activity of your endeavors to walk as the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as the expectants of that heavenly "joy, which is unspeakable and full of glory."

3. In the third place, have any of you good reason to believe, that you were guided to the Lord's table by pure and upright motives? Were you anxious to ac-

quire the graces that were necessary to qualify you for the ordinance? Did you present your offering in faith, and penitence, and love? And have you felt it to be a good and blessed thing for you to "draw near unto God?" And need I remind you of your obligation to be thankful to Him in whose mercy all this has originated—who prepared the feast for you—who invited you to partake of it—who made you meet for enjoying it—who spread over you "his banner of love"—and enabled you to rejoice in the light of his countenance, and in the riches of his grace? Let your hearts be warmed with sentiments of gratitude for his abundant goodness; let your lips celebrate his praise; let your conduct show the obligations which you feel to devote yourselves to his service. But while thus, in one sense, you have reason to be elevated by your communion service, you have reason also, in another view, to be lowly, and to "join trembling with your mirth." Sincere as you may have been, and suitable as were your principles and dispositions, you cannot but acknowledge that much sin and imperfection have attached to your solemn service. How cold have been your devotions—how listless your attention—how weak and wavering your faith—how inadequate your love—how disproportionate your hatred of sin—how undetermined your resolutions and purposes of obedience! I say, how far short, in these and other respects, have you come of that standard of duty to which you should have conformed! And should not this excite in you the sentiments of humility? Should it not lead you to the throne of grace, that you may ask and obtain forgiveness? And should it not make you anxious on every future occasion to have the graces of the Spirit in livelier and more vigorous exercise? Study, then, to be truly humble under a sense of your unworthiness. Neglect not to pray for the pardon which your consciences tell you that you need. And be stimulated to seek, with greater earnestness than ever, that habitual preparation of the heart

l of the life which shall fit you for a still more ac-
ıtable, and a still more useful, and still more com-
table, commemoration of the Saviour's death. It is
s, indeed, that you are to walk worthy of the pro-
sion you have this day made, and of the privilege you
ve this day enjoyed. O, my friends, considering all
t you have seen and done at the table of the Lord,
w holy should you be in all manner of conversation
l of conduct! You never can do too much to tes-
your gratitude and your devotedness to him whom
ı have there remembered. Let it be the great bus-
ss of your life to live to Christ. Live to him by re
ıg on his merits, and "glorying in his cross." Live
him by keeping his commandments, and imitating
example, and submitting to the discipline of his
vidence. Live to him by observing punctually and
outly those ordinances, which he has instituted for
comfort of your souls, and for the improvement of
ır character. Live to him, by cultivating that
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ı as his disciples, but which he so conspicuously dis-
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ı constrained to die that you might live. Live to
ı by doing what you can, and by doing it with all
ır might, to promote the knowledge and the influence
ıis religion in the world—to carry abroad the glories
his reign over the face of the whole earth—and to
ıg every heart within your reach under the dominion
ıis grace and power. You know, my friends, that
ən I exhort you thus to live to Christ, I exhort you
what is both becoming and necessary in his pro-
ıed followers. Do not reject my counsel, then, as
here were no propriety in its meaning, no justice in
application, no importance in its effects. Let no
ıptation prevail upon you to go aside from that line
conduct which you have so many motives to pursue
h patience and perseverance. Act at all times wor-

thy of your high, your holy, your heavenly "vocation." And, amidst all the trials to which your faith and your virtue may be exposed in an evil world, think on the communion you have enjoyed, and on the love you have remembered, and on the vows you have taken, and on the hope you have professed, that, with the help of God, you may be encouraged to "hold your confidence stedfast unto the end," and be qualified at last to "enter into the joy of your Lord."

4. In the fourth and last place, have you for the first time commemorated the death of Christ at a communion table? I congratulate you on this public profession of your faith in the Redeemer, in his gospel, and in his cross, and I would beseech you to persevere in it, and to justify its sincerity, in every part of your future conduct. You must not think that, having appeared at the Lord's table, you have now secured the character of disciples, and on the ground of what is past, may conclude that all is well with your spiritual interests. No, my young friends; the character of disciples is to be ascertained, not by partaking of this ordinance, solemn and important as the service is, but by those principles, and by that conduct, which a right observance of it requires in communicants, and which it has a direct and powerful tendency to produce and to improve. Your conscience will tell you whether you were indeed possessed of such principles and of such conduct, before you came to the Lord's table; but charitably presuming that you were, it must now be your concern to live as those who have given themselves away to God, who believe in Christ with the heart, who look for salvation through the merits of a crucified Redeemer, and who, living in this world "as strangers and pilgrims," are the expectants of that better and purer and happier world which lies beyond it. I would not conceal from you the difficulties and dangers you will have to encounter in your Christian progress. Nor would I have you to conceive yourselves at liberty to

make, in any case, a compromise with sin, as if it were possible for you to "serve two masters." You must expect to meet with much opposition; and that opposition it is necessary for you to resist and to overcome. But be not cast down: He that is for you is infinitely "greater than all that can be against you," He will "make his grace sufficient for you, and will perfect his strength in your weakness." You are in the hands of a compassionate and almighty Saviour. Trust in Him, and he will make you "more than conquerors" over all your enemies. He will guide you in difficulty; he will protect you in danger; he will fortify you against temptation; he will strengthen you for duty; he will comfort you in all your tribulations; he will lead you through the dark "valley of the shadow of death;" and he will bring you in triumph to his heavenly kingdom. Encouraged and animated by such promises, be stedfast in the faith and obedience of the gospel. Diligently employ the means of grace which you enjoy, by reading the Scriptures, attending the public worship of God, keeping holy the Sabbath-day, and praying to your Father in heaven. Avoid the company of the thoughtless, the impure, and the profane. And associate with those who fear the Lord and keep his commandments, and who can assist you, by their counsel and their example, in your journey to heaven. Walk under the habitual impression that the eye of God is upon you, to witness all your thoughts, and all your words, and all your ways. Frequently recal to your recollection the service of this day; and when tempted to sin, remember your solemn vows, and keep yourselves from transgression. And let every other consideration be enforced by the prospect of death and judgment. Ere long you must die, and give an account to God. Nay, you may be called soon and suddenly to give in that account. And, this being the case, O how vigilant, and how active, should you be in the work that is given you, and that you have under-

taken to do! Youth and health and prosperity, ar
security against an unexpected summons to de
"Thou fool, this night thy soul may be requir
thee." "Be ye always ready, for ye know neithe
day nor the hour when the Son of man cometh.
what I say unto you, I say unto all, watch." "
unto Him that is able to keep your from falling, ar
present you faultless before the presence of his
with exceeding joy; to the only wise God our Sav
be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both
and ever. Amen."

SERMON XIV.

ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRAYER.

MATTHEW vii. 7.

"*Ask, and it shall be given you.*"

a former discourse on these words, we proposed to
nsider the encouragements we have to engage in the
ty of prayer. And the first of these encouragements
which we directed your attention was, that the God
whom we pray is as willing and ready, as he is able,
bestow upon us the blessings that we need and ask.
is proposition we proved and illustrated by observ-
, first, that God's commanding us to pray, proceeds
the supposition that he will not withhold what we
according to his injunction: Secondly, that he gives
plicit declarations and assurances of that willingness
ich his commandment warranted us to infer; and
t these declarations and assurances are of such a
ure as to remove every doubt or apprehension we
ght have entertained on the subject: Thirdly, that
various representations of himself, which he has
en in the scriptures, afford the most powerful argu-
nts in favor of the same conclusion—as for instance,
en he represents himself as seated on a throne of

grace, and in the character of our heavenly Father: And fourthly, that he has given his own Son for our salvation; and this unspeakable gift is a pledge and earnest that every other gift which is necessary for us will be conferred; agreeably to the reasoning of the apostle, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him freely give us all things."

II. We now proceed to consider, as another encouragement to pray, that Jesus Christ is our High Priest, and Advocate with the Father.

We should not, and if our minds are properly affected, we cannot, approach God without convictions of guilt and unworthiness. It is unchangeably true that his nature and character are distinguished by infinite holiness. It is no less true, that we are polluted with that moral demerit by which, as an infinitely holy being, he must be offended. And while these impressions ought at all times to have a place in our minds, especially must they prevail when we go into his presence, that we may solicit him for benefits. It must then occur to us not only that we do not deserve them, but that were we to be treated according to our desert, wrath, and not mercy, would be our portion.

It is true, indeed, that if we are reconciled to God by faith in the righteousness of Christ, and can look up to him in the spirit of adoption as our heavenly Father, such apprehensions need not distress or overwhelm us. Still, however, our being justified does not prevent us from sinning. Every sin we commit may, on that account, be considered as so much the more aggravated, and so much the more displeasing, in the sight of God. And occasionally there may be such a deep consciousness of guilt—our souls may be so burdened with a sense of iniquity—we may be so much cast down by the number and heinousness of those transgressions which set themselves in array against us—that we cannot look up to Him against whom we have done evil, and may feel as if it would be adding to our demerit

were we to call upon his name, and supplicate any blessing from his hand.

Now, in these circumstances, our great, our only refuge is in the mediation of Jesus Christ, which is sufficient to remove every ground of fear, and to give us confidence in the petitions we prefer. His sacrifice is adequate to the expiation of all our guilt. It was appointed—it has been offered up—it has been fully accepted—for this very purpose. And God's perfections are honored, and his glory promoted, by the forgiveness of all who are interested in its atoning virtue. Nor is it forgiveness alone that it has obtained for us. By removing the barrier which stood between God and us, it allows his loving-kindness to flow in upon us freely and fully; and by conciliating that loving-kindness, there is secured for us every blessing which the divine bounty can be deemed capable of bestowing upon those who are the objects of it—every blessing that is essential to the salvation and happiness of the sinful creatures on whose account the sacrifice of Christ was instituted. Whether we consider the value of Christ's sacrifice as directly meriting what we need, or whether we consider it as making way for the exercise of God's love, in communicating what we need, the effect is equally precious, certain, and extensive. The value of the sacrifice is infinite, and will merit every thing—the love of God to which it gives unrestrained operation, is also infinite, and will communicate every thing, that is implied in the largest and most liberal sense of the term, "redemption." But it is upon the worth and efficacy of this very sacrifice that we are called to depend, when we ask any thing of God. Depending upon it, we are assured that, for its sake, we shall receive. And as it avails to the cancelling of all sin, and to the restoration of the favor which we had lost, and to the attainment of whatever is requisite for our salvation, we have no reason to be afraid that any one boon will be refused, which it is competent for us to ask, or necessary *for us to possess.*

This argument becomes still more powerful, when we recollect the nature and consequences of our union with Christ. If we have truly believed in him, we are members of his mystical body, and are therefore partakers of all that belongs to him as our spiritual head. He has secured all the blessings that are necessary for his people. They are treasured up in him, as his purchased and ascertained property, for their welfare. And if we are his people by that faith which links us to him, these blessings must be ours, in title or in possession, as certainly as they are his. He has already won them by his vicarious, perfect, and accepted obedience. He won them, not for himself, but for those whom he came to redeem. And the moment that faith makes us one with him, we acquire a covenant-right to them, which we are warranted to plead at the throne of grace; and pleading this, our plea must be successful, not merely because God is good and merciful, but also because he is righteous and true. This doctrine is asserted by the apostle John when he says, "If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." The faithfulness and the justice of God are here appealed to as guaranteeing pardon and purification to those who return to him in his appointed way. And in like manner, and for the same reason, when we ask any thing of him as believers in Christ, we ask what Christ has already secured a title to, and what God therefore is pledged, by solemn engagement, to grant for Christ's sake. To be fearful, then, that we shall not receive, is not only to distrust the divine compassion, but moreover, to impeach the divine rectitude. And thus those very attributes which, when contemplated in reference merely to our guiltiness, were apt to drive us away from God's presence, and to repress every petition for good, by extinguishing every hope of its being answered, become our most potent encouragement to pray, in consequence of the satisfaction which has been rendered to them by the finished work of Christ, and of the claim which has

been thereby established upon them, to fulfil whatever was promised to our substitute and surety. In this view, we may ask with freedom; and we may ask with the unwavering confidence that we shall receive.

There is another important circumstance connected with the one now mentioned, which deserves consideration. The oblation which Christ presented on behalf of his people, has secured for them a title to all the blessings of salvation; but as our great High Priest, he has not only offered up that oblation, and procured its acceptance—he has also taken it with him into "the holiest of all," and there he "ever liveth to make intercession for us." What can be more consolatory; what can be more animating, than the persuasion, that we have "an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins?" Were we applying to an earthly sovereign for any favor, we should naturally feel ourselves encouraged to make the application, in spite of any obstacles arising from the obscurity of our situation, or even the imperfections of our character, by knowing that we had a friend in the royal presence to urge our suit, whose skill and influence would all be employed in our behalf, and exerted to ensure success. And surely we must experience the power of this motive when it is furnished by the intercession of Christ, who presents our petitions at the Father's right hand, and enforces them with all the affection and with all the weight of a Redeemer, whose love and whose merit and whose wisdom are unbounded. He not only pleads with a Being who is already disposed to pity and to help us, but with a Being who has been propitiated by a sacrifice of his own appointment. He rests his plea upon the sacredness of a covenant, whose conditions he has amply fulfilled, as the representative of his people. He asks for blessings which are already his, by the right of purchase or of conquest. And, therefore, his prayer, must be prevalent, inasmuch as there are holiness and mercy and faithfulness in God. His very admission into God's heavenly presence with

the blood of atonement, and as a reward for his mediatorial labors, is a complete security for his success, because it demonstrates that God was well-pleased with what he had done and suffered for sinners; and, looking to every thing connected with his nature and his work, we cannot suppose that he will ever forfeit that divine acceptance which he has gained at such a costly price, and which has been made over to him in such a solemn manner. So that when we rely upon the efficacy of his intercession, we rely upon that which possesses infinite worth, and must necessarily be available to every thing which involves the well-being of those for whom it is made. And as we are assured that he makes intercession for us who believe in his name; that he perfumes our supplications with the incense of his infinite merit; that he presents and urges them as his own; and that God is glorified by granting his requests—we may banish all doubt and hesitation from our minds, and ask with the firm conviction that we shall not ask in vain. "Seeing that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." The intercession of such a Saviour, in such circumstances is fitted to give us, and if we understand it aright, and have a believing regard to it, it will give us, a humble, holy, boldness in the exercise of prayer. It will relieve us from all the embarrassments which may be occasioned by a sense of our unworthiness. It will encourage us to make known to God the desires of our hearts, not for any one thing, but for every thing, that we need, as sinful, dependent, immortal creatures. It was to save us that Christ gave himself an offering and a sacrifice unto God. It is in prosecution of the same great end that he has gone with that sacrifice to appear in the presence of God for us. It is for nothing less that he continues there, discharging the office of an Advocate with the Father. And, therefore, we may petition for all the benefits that are comprehended in the term

"salvation," in the full persuasion that not one of them will be withheld.

Let this then, my believing friends, be your encouragement in prayer, that Christ is your propitiation and your intercessor. Whatever may occur to cast down and disquiet your soul, still trust in God, who hears Christ always, and will not, cannot, reject his suit, or deny him what he asks. And "whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in his name, he will give it you;" for with him you are identified, as it were, in the scheme of God's redeeming mercy. I cannot say to you, that hitherto ye have asked nothing in Christ's name. For all along, it must be presumed, that you have been asking in that name, and in no other. But if you have doubted or desponded when supplicating at God's throne, we cannot but fear that you have forgotten, or have not sufficiently realized and felt, the efficacy of Christ's name. In the mere name, indeed, in the word itself, there is no such efficacy, no such virtue, no such charm, that the soundings of it, or the thinking on it, should bring you any blessing. Asking in his name, means the exercise of a conscious reliance upon his mediation. When you pray, let that reliance be in full and lively operation. Let this be the case in every season of devotion. More especially let it be present with you when convictions of guilt and sinfulness rise up to becloud your views of heaven, and to make you fearful in the hour of prayer. In such exigencies, look steadfastly to Christ, meditate deeply on him, confide unhesitatingly in him, as that Saviour who presented an acceptable offering, and who, on the ground of that offering, makes continual and prevalent intercession in your behalf. And take courage to ask to the full extent of your necessities. "Ask in faith, nothing wavering." "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full."

III. In the third place, we may mention as another encouragement to pray, that the Holy Spirit is promised to assist us in this sacred duty.

There is no duty whatever, which of ourselves we are able to discharge aright. And this melancholy fact holds true with regard to prayer, fully as much as it does with regard to any other. Prayer is an exercise so purely spiritual; it requires such an effort of the attention, such a concentration of the affections, such a freedom from external interference, such a minute acquaintance with our own hearts and characters and circumstances, and such a constant and steady contemplation of the peculiar objects of faith,—that at all times we engage in it with painful imperfection, and often fail in its most essential and interesting properties. And a sense of this naturally tends to increase the evil, and even to make us go seldomer, and with less willingness, and with less comfort and advantage, to the throne of grace.

Now, to counteract such feelings, and to prevent such mischief, let it be remembered with gratitude and delight, that we have the promise of divine aid, suited to the nature and the necessities of the case. We have the promise of the Holy Spirit for this purpose. The Holy Spirit, indeed, is promised to direct and to aid us in the performance of all our Christian duties; and without his blessed and powerful influences, we could not advance one step in the path of piety and righteousness; we could neither think a good thought, nor speak a good word, nor do a good work. But he is especially promised as the "Spirit of grace and of supplications." He is represented as sustaining this character, and in this character as imparted to believers, and dwelling in them. Having, therefore, the promise of a divine agency to assist them in their devotions, they may trust they will be prevented from "asking amiss," and consequently asking unsuccessfully.

I need not detail to you the various particulars as to which this assistance is vouchsafed. Whether it be the difficulty of distinctly realizing Him to whom you address yourselves in prayer—or whether it be an inade*quate* knowledge of the blessings you need, or an inade-

quate impression of their value—whether it be a weakness in your faith, or a langor in your affections—whether it be a distraction of the mind by worldly cares, and unholy associations—whatever it be which might enfeeble, or desecrate, or nullify your applications to God for the blessings you need, the remedy is to be found in the influences of his Spirit, who is sent for this very purpose, that he may teach and enable you to pray—that he may incline your hearts to this exercise—that he may put you into a proper frame of mind for it—that he may sanctify you for engaging in it in a suitable manner—that he may guard you against the intrusion of those vain or unhallowed imaginations by which it would be polluted—that he may give you a lively conviction of the importance and urgency of your wants—that he may suggest to you such petitions as correspond with all the varieties of your condition—that he may keep your view fixed singly and intensely on the Being to whose benignity you appeal—and that he may direct all your aspirations through that medium by which alone the sinful creature can hold intercourse with the Holy Creator—the merit and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ. All these benefits—and every thing else that is requisite for asking so as to receive, are involved in the gift of the Holy Spirit. And he who is privileged to pray "with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit," need not be dejected by the consideration of that ignorance, and weakness, and much imperfection with which he is naturally beset. The Spirit will guide and strengthen and sanctify him in this service as in every other; and, yielding to his gracious influences, he will find it true in respect to prayer, that "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

There is a very striking and significant statement on this part of our subject, in Paul's Epistle to the Romans, (viii. 26.) "Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us, *with groanings which* cannot be uttered. And he

that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God." The Spirit is our great auxiliary in the divine life. He helps us amidst all the infirmities that cleave to our nature, or that arise from our situation: and as our infirmities attach to the duty of prayer, so he helps us in the performance of that duty. We are so deficient when left to our own resources, that we know not what we should pray for, and we know not how to pray for it as we ought. But here the Spirit comes to our aid; and so adequate and so efficient is the aid which he imparts—so much does he inspire us with devotional sentiment, and so much does he dictate, as it were, the very petitions which we are to offer up, and so much does he take the management of our understandings and our hearts at the throne of grace, and so much are the outpourings of our souls there to be traced and ascribed to his operation, that he is represented as executing a prerogative similar to that which belongs to Christ, and as "making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered"—exciting us to long, with inexpressible ardor, after the blessings of that redemption, to which he seals us, and rendering our prayers for these, fervent, appropriate, and effectual, acceptable to that God who knows what are the thoughts and desires of his saints, and who regards them as inwrought by his own Spirit, whose suggestions they are, and who will answer them in mercy as being all in conformity to the purpose which he has formed concerning the deliverance and the happiness of his people.

What rich encouragement does this afford you, my Christian brethren, in the exercise of prayer! Not only does God to whom you pray invite you into his presence, and assure you of his willingness to "grant you according to your own heart, and to fulfil all your counsel;" but you are taught to look to Christ, his anointed Son, as having purchased for you the blessings *that* you need and ask, and as, on that ground, inter-

ceding, powerfully and prevalently, that you may receive them in full and suitable measure. And then the Holy Spirit is provided and sent forth, that the divine work may be perfected—that you may be instructed in the proper enjoyment of this distinguished privilege—in the right performance of this sacred duty—in the efficient use of this important means of grace—and that you may be enabled so to order your desires, and so to present your supplications, as that nothing shall be wanting to secure your attainment of all that is needful for you in time and eternity. Let all your apprehensions arising from conscious infirmity, be dissipated by this consideration. Let your souls be enlarged and stimulated by it, that you may always pray, and not faint. And let it come home to you with double power, when you remember that the Holy Spirit is promised to them that ask him—that his influences as "the spirit of supplications" will be given in answer to your humble and believing requests—and that the more you depend upon his aid, and the more importunate and persevering you are in imploring it, the more liberal will be its supply, the greater freedom will you have in seeking God's face and favor; and the more plentifully will he pour down upon you the bounties of his grace, and the joys of his salvation.

IV. Finally, the happy experience of believers in all ages, furnishes another encouragement to prayer.

When you are exhorted to pray, it is no new duty which you are called to perform. It is not a duty whose importance and usefulness have yet to be brought to the test of experiment. It is not an exercise whose tendency to comfort and improve those who engage in it, is, in any measure speculative or not fully proved. The commandment of God to pray—the privilege of his people to pray—are as ancient as the church itself. The commandment has been obeyed, the privilege has been possessed, ever since there was a converted sinner upon the earth. And the uniform testimony has been, *that in the "keeping* of that commandment there

is a great reward," and that from the use of that privilege, all comfort and edification are derived. Nay, my friends, if it has been given "to you in the behalf of Christ Jesus to believe in his name," you also must know what it is to pray, and I may appeal to your own experience, if you have not found it to be a good and a profitable thing to draw near unto God. And if that be the case—if you have found God when you sought him—if blessings have descended upon you when you supplicated them—if frequenting the throne of grace you can say that hitherto the Lord hath helped you, may not you expect that, continuing to frequent that throne, goodness and mercy will continue to follow you till you take up your abode in the house of the Lord above? May you not expect this, even though you cannot distinctly trace a connexion between the particular tokens of kindness you have received and the petitions by which they were preceded. From the scheme of Christianity—from the promises of the gospel—from what has actually happened in the history of your Christian life, you must know and feel that the instrumentality of prayer has been so blessed as to procure for you the spiritual good that you enjoy: and this is enough to teach you that, by persevering in the use of the same instrumentality, similar good, in a greater or in a less degree, will come into your lot from the hand of Him who has heretofore heard your supplications and answered them in mercy. And if you be placed in more difficult, more dangerous, more needful, more trying circumstances than you were ever placed in before, and need a proportional encouragement, you may surely find it in the case of multitudes, who have come through far greater tribulations and been delivered from far heavier burdens, than any that you are doomed to suffer or to bear; who clung the closer to the footstool and the throne of mercy, the more that they were tempted and afflicted; who never ceased to "cry to Him who was able to save them;" who were thus rescued out of all their fears and troubles,

nd have now exchanged the wailings of distress, and he entreaty for deliverance, for the unceasing accents f gratitude and victory and joy. On looking around ou among your brethren in Christ, it is not unlikely hat you may discover some who can tell you, and tell ou truly, that they have been visited with "fears within nd fightings without"—that they have been made to walk in darkness and had no light"—that many and grievous and insupportable were the evils which they had to endure—but that they did not despair—that they cried mightily to the Lord their God—that he heard them, and shed the light of life and consolation upon their souls, and guided their feet into the way of peace; and made them to sing of the mercy which they had implored,—and that they are now living and blessed monuments of the compassion of the God of prayer, and of the wisdom and the advantage of seeking Him in that character amidst every scene of adversity and alarm. And, if you know not within the limits of your Christian brotherhood, any such example as that which I have now supposed, you may look into the Bible and there you will find it, set before you in the most interesting light, and affording the strongest possible encouragement to engage and persevere in prayer. Throughout the whole of the Book of Psalms there is a practical demonstration of this: and especially in the 116th, at the beginning, where the pious King of Israel testifies to the efficacy of prayer, in terms the most affecting and pathetic. "I love the Lord because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me; and the fears of hell got hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. Gracious is the Lord, and righteous: yea our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple. I was brought low and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bounti-

fully with thee. For thou hast delivered my sou from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet fron falling."

Be persuaded, then, to follow in the footsteps, o "the saints and the excellent of the earth" who hav gone before you. Imitate their example: be encour aged by their experience: let the success which ac companied their prayers and supplications determin you to pray and to supplicate without ceasing, what ever you need from Him whose "ear is never heav that it cannot hear, and whose hand is never shortene that it cannot save." "Ask, and it shall be given you seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opene unto you; for every one that asketh, receiveth, and h that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shal be opened."

SERMON XV.

PRAYER IN AFFLICTION.

JAMES v. 13.

"Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray."

I NEED not tell you, my friends, that you are all liable to affliction. You can scarcely have lived so long in the world as the youngest of you have done, without suffering it in some of its various forms. At this very moment, perhaps, I speak to not a few who are under its actual pressure. At any rate, there are many in the circle of your acquaintance, or in the range of your neighborhood, whom you know to be visited with distress in their own persons, or in those of their families and their friends, in their minds, or in their bodies, or in their outward condition. In all this you see an ample demonstration of the saying that "man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward." And from it you should learn that, though your "cup may now be running over," and your "mountain standing strong," it will not be so always—that the days of adversity will assuredly come, and that these days may be longer and darker, and more stormy, than you are at present willing to anticipate.

Now, in such circumstances, what does it become you to do? The apostle tells you in the words of my text; "Is any among you afflicted? Let him pray." Here we are taught that devotion is the true and unfailing refuge of the mourner—that our comfort in the midst of sorrow is to be found in the doctrines and the exercises of religion—that whatever be the nature of our distresses, we should have recourse to God, as the Father of mercies, the fountain of consolation, the rock of our deliverance and our safety.

No doubt, in the time of trouble, prescriptions very different from these will be freely tendered to you, and tendered with some appearance of wisdom, and with liberal professions of friendship.

The philosopher will tell you that afflictions are the lot of humanity—that they are absolutely inevitable—that your grief on account of them is useless and unavailing—and that therefore you should try to become indifferent to them, and submit quietly to your fate, whatever it may be: a lesson which it is impossible to reduce to practice while the constitution of our nature continues what it is, and which, were it practicable, would only serve, by deadening our sensibilities, to deprive us of all that is amiable, and to exhibit a case in which the remedy is incalculably worse than the disease. The man who could remain in stoical and deathlike apathy, amidst all the ills and calamities of life, is far less an object of envy, than the man who weeps at every trifling injury, and allows himself to be overwhelmed by disappointment and pain. The latter is only weak; and with his weakness, may have much that is interesting; but the former, in the sternness of that virtue which he has assumed, has lost every gracious attribute of the heart, and made himself as incapable of relishing the joys, as he has made himself proof against the sorrows, with which his lot is chequered.

The mere moralist will talk to you of the utility of those trials to which you are subjected; of the duty, the propriety, and the dignity of patient endurance; of

the examples of suffering and of magnanimity with which the history of mankind abounds; of the necessity that exists for summoning up the energies of your minds to meet the exigencies of your case; and of the advantage you will derive, and the reputation you will acquire, by rising superior to all that is harassing in your experience and gloomy in your prospects. And, doubtless, these considerations are not altogether inapplicable or useless. But yet, of themselves, they are far from being sufficient for the purpose for which they are professedly set before you. They rather point out what should prevent you from murmuring, than what will inspire you with comfort and resignation; they show you the temper and character to which you should aspire, rather than furnish you with the means and the motives that may secure their attainment: they do not carry you either to the source of affliction or to the source of consolation; they provide you only with what may heal your wounds slightly and superficially, not with what will cure them radically and effectually: they suggest to you some adventitious views which may help to mitigate your disquietudes, instead of urging upon you the principle whose power is adequate to subdue these disquietudes, if it do not remove their cause: in short, they are marked by this capital defect, they while they deal but very partially both with our affections and our destiny, they make no provision for our inherent weakness, and fail to direct us to that divine aid, without which all our knowledge, and all our meditations, and all our efforts, are fruitless and inefficient.

Besides these, there is a class of comforters from whom better counsel might be expected, but from whom no better counsel, or rather counsel not so good, is obtained. The persons to whom I refer are nominally Christians. They profess to rest their own hopes of salvation on the gospel, and to think it essential to the salvation of others. And they would be indignant were we to accuse them of any disrespect for the Scriptures,

or for the scheme of mercy which the Scriptures unfold. But yet, the practical system upon which they act is as worldly as if they had no acquaintance with Christianity or no belief in it. And if you follow their direction when you are afflicted, you will find that sacred views and sacred employments are almost wholly interdicted, and that if you are to have any thing to do with these, the impression which they are to be permitted to make, and the influence which they are to be permitted to maintain, must be as feeble and as slight as possible. Accordingly, it is no uncommon thing for them to tell you, that, in such circumstances, you should beware of dwelling much, or of dwelling seriously, on what has befallen you; that religious books are a great deal too dispiriting and dismal for your perusal; that it is only to increase your malady when you seek for the conversation of a clergyman, or of a pious friend; and that nothing can be worse for you than to seclude yourselves from gay company, and to spend any portion of your time in retirement or in solitude. One would be apt to suppose that they would recommend the perusal of your Bible; but no, they would much rather put into your hands the news or the novel of the day. Surely they might be expected to suggest attendance on public ordinances; and yet, though they may not be so bold as to condemn it, they will be much more urgent that you should go to the theatre than to the church. And instead of the offices of private and domestic piety, they do not hesitate to substitute such miserable expedients as the card-table and the midnight assembly. In short, their only object being to dissipate your melancholy, and to restore your spirits to their wonted tone, and to bring you back to the enjoyment of life, as they call it, they would have you to give yourselves up without reserve to all the entertainments within your reach; to frequent the haunts of levity and mirth; to associate with those whose pursuits, and whose very countenances, are an antidote to sadness; to force the laugh which refuses to come spontaneously;

and, in fine, to engage in all that stands most directly opposed to solemnity of feeling and seriousness of occupation.

I know not, my friends, if, on any supposition, such counsels are to be considered as wise or appropriate. Were I a mere worldling, a very infidel,—yet had I a particle of the best susceptibilities of my nature left within me, and especially had my kind affections been in the least degree cultivated and refined, could I tolerate the advice which bade me forget the dear friend, the beloved parent, or the darling child whom I had just consigned to the grave, by plunging into the vanities and pleasures of fashionable life? And if there be truth in religion; if the Bible be a revelation from God; if the doctrines which it teaches, and the prospects which it sets before us, be realities of infinite and eternal moment, as many of those to whom we refer profess to believe, and would deem it foul scorn to be suspected of doubting or denying,—then surely, and beyond all controversy, it is at once guilt and madness that would either give or take the admonition to bury all our sorrows in the thoughtlessness, the dissipation, and the frivolous amusements of a vain and ungodly world.

But while we protest and warn you against such unsound monitors—such miserable comforters as those of whom we have been speaking, we would supply their place with the apostle, who, guided by the Spirit of wisdom, says, "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray." And when the apostle holds this language, he is not to be understood as teaching that the mere act of prayer is sufficient to answer the purpose which he has in view; or that this purpose can be answered by the most conscientious and persevering discharge of that important duty. There are various methods by which your afflictions may be removed or alleviated—various methods by which you may be rescued from them, or by which you may be supported under them, and by which you may be enabled to feel and to act

worthily with respect to them. These are either dictated by the word of God or suggested by the arrangements of his providence; and it is right and necessary that they should be brought into operation, and employed with as much skill and energy as we can command. Prayer, however, is peculiarly suitable, and deserving of particular notice. It is not only in itself, and, by its own independent fitness, becoming, and useful, and obligatory in the season of distress, but it is requisite as an accompaniment to all the other exercises in which we then engage, and to all the other means which we then bring into action—requisite to give them their proper tone and character, and to procure that blessing from above, by which alone they can be made effectual. Prayer, indeed, is a duty in which we should be habitually occupied, according to the express commandment of God, and agreeably to the place which he has assigned it among the duties of personal Christianity. But, while we should be habitually occupied in it, there are times and circumstances in which it should be resorted to with more than ordinary zeal. And it is a matter of reason, as well as of devout feeling, that, when we are afflicted, we stand more in need of it, and should therefore be given to it with more frequency and with more fervor. We are required by the voice of divine authority, to "call upon the Lord in the day of trouble, that he may deliver us, that we may glorify him." His people have, in every age, recognised it to be no less a privilege than a duty to obey this precept; and, in crying to him "from the depths," they have often found comfort and salvation. Our Saviour himself has given us an example of it, for, in his hour of trial and suffering, he "offered up prayers and supplications to Him who was able to save him from death;" and, "being in agony, he prayed the more earnestly,"—and he was "heard in that he feared." And, indeed, my friends, what fitter, what kinder, exhortation can we give you, when you are afflicted, than that you should bow down at the throne of grace, and pour out before Him

who sitteth upon it, the sorrows, and the desires, and the petitions of your hearts; that you should, in this manner, and on such occasions, hold communion with your heavenly Father, and apply for those communications which correspond with the nature of your situation and the extent of your necessities; that your views should be directed, and your prayers addressed, to Him from whom your afflictions proceed, or under whom they are permitted to befal you, who both can and will remove them, according to your entreaty, if he see it to be for your real good—who, at all events, can cheer and uphold you while you groan beneath their burden—who can overrule and bless them for promoting your spiritual improvement and your eternal well-being—and who can make them all issue in your advancement to that "crown of righteousness and glory which fadeth not away."

It is of importance, however, that you be not only convinced of the propriety and the benefit of praying to God when you are afflicted, but that you also attend to the leading characteristics of the prayer which you then prefer, that you may be at once persuaded to engage in the exercise, and to engage in it acceptably and successfully. With this view,

1. I remark in the first place, that it may be the prayer of nature. "The Hearer of prayer" is the God of nature. He has implanted in you certain instinctive tendencies which it is lawful to gratify, when this is not done in opposition to the express intimations of his will, or by means of which he disapproves. And one of the most powerful of these instincts, is the tendency to escape from danger and from misery of every kind. From every calamity then, which befals, or which threatens you, you are permitted, and you are bound, to seek deliverance. This is what our Saviour did. He suffered no farther and no longer than was consistent with the work which he had undertaken to perform. And, even when he could not fail to know that all which he was doomed to endure was necessary for our

redemption, yet he yielded to the impulse of natural feeling, and in the exceeding sorrowfulness of his soul, offered up this memorable petition, "Father, save me from this hour—if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." You have the authority of his example, therefore, for asking the removal of your afflictions. It becomes you to use every proper means of averting the evils which menace you, and of terminating the evils which have already come upon you. But forget not also to pray to this effect. Pray that the God of mercy and of power may be pleased to take away all that pains, and all that harasses you. Pray that he may direct you to those measures which are best calculated to accomplish your relief, and that he would bless them for that end. And, pray with all the earnestness and ardor which may be suggested by the poignancy, and the extent, and the duration of your sufferings.

2. But, secondly, your prayer must be the prayer of resignation. Our Saviour had no sooner prayed "If it be possible let this cup pass from me," than he added, "Nevertheless, not as I will but as thou wilt." Resignation was the habit of his mind: and in the hour of his deepest anguish, this virtue had its perfect work. He knew that all things were well ordered. He entertained not a wish, nor a thought, at variance with the divine appointments. And at the very moment that he was imploring exemption from suffering, with a fervor which demonstrates how unspeakably great that suffering was, at that moment his supplication was qualified by the feeling and expression of unreserved acquiescence in the will of God. Three several times did he lift up this voice of supplication, but as often did he resign himself to the good pleasure of his heavenly Father. "If it be possible let this cup pass from me: yet not my will but thine be done." Such is the spirit, and such is the conduct, which should distinguish us when we pray to God in the midst of our afflictions. We should recollect that these afflictions are the discipline of his providence; that they are sent to us, or continued with

us, in the exercise not merely of sovereign power, but of unerring wisdom, of tender mercy, of unchangeable faithfulness; that they are more or less connected with our highest interests in time and in eternity; and that however difficult we may find it to bear them, yet if we bear them with patience and submission, they will prove in the end to be blessings far richer and more important than the health, the uninterrupted prosperity, the unmingled enjoyment on which we are accustomed to set so much value. Recollecting these things, resignation, amidst our most painful privations, and our keenest sorrows, must be deemed equally rational and dutiful. And not one wish should be conceived by us, nor one petition be presented by us, for deliverance from the chastening rod, which is not modified by the sentiment, and accompanied by the language that imparted such a moral charm to our Lord's prayer of agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Our afflictions may be numerous, and poignant, and protracted: we may be racked with pain, or we may be pining away under the power of a lingering disease: we may be subjected to all the hardships, and all the scorn of unlooked for poverty: we may be lamenting the misrepresentation, and reproach, and calumny by which our good name has been obscured or blasted: we may be bending in painful suspense over the sick-bed of one whose life is dear to us as our own, and trembling lest every coming moment should tear from us the object of our fondest affection—and in the midst of these trying scenes and heart-rending visitations, we are permitted to send our messenger of prayer to heaven, to beseech Almighty God to visit us with salvation, and to beseech him with an intensity of desire, and an energy of language proportioned to the severity of what we feel and fear. But still our prayers are defective, and unbecoming, and unacceptable, unless they convey the homage of unaffected and unqualified submission. We may obtain what we ask, but it may prove in our sad experience to be a curse instead of a blessing. We may, as to the subject of our entreaties, receive "beauty

for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;" but at the same time we may be putting away from us the gift of eternal life, and continuing in those fatal corruptions from which the fire of affliction was intended to purify and save us. And thus the ordinance of prayer, which was appointed to help us to "work out our salvation," may be perverted into the instrument of impatience, ungodliness, and ruin. Let us, therefore, be ready, amidst all our distresses, to commit our lot to the undisputed management of God. Let no weight of trial tempt us to withdraw from him that confidence which we ought to repose in the dealings of infinite perfection. In our saddest experience, let us cast all our cares and all our sorrows upon Him "who careth for us," and is "afflicted in all our afflictions;" resting assured that there is both wisdom and mercy in his most desolating dispensations, though a dejected and distrustful heart would lead us to suspect that his wisdom had failed in its exercise, or that his "mercy was clean gone forever." And while we address to him the prayer, which he himself, as the Author of our natural frame, has taught us to utter, and to which the example of his own Son has given a high and sacred sanction, that "if it be possible, each successive cup of affliction may pass from us," let us never forget, and never fail, to annex the tribute of a sincere, enlightened, and entire resignation; "nevertheless, O Lord, not my will but thine be done."

3. In the third place, our prayer in the time of affliction must be the prayer of faith. On no occasion can we expect that our prayers will meet with a favorable reception or a gracious answer, unless they be preferred in the name of Christ. All intercourse with God is forbidden which is not carried on through the medium of Him, who alone is the true and living "way to the Father." Sin has separated between God and us; and it is by the mediation of his own Son, that this wall of separation has been removed—that recon-

ciliation with the divine majesty has been effected—that the throne of grace has been made accessible to us. And when we apply to the Almighty for any blessing, the application must be made in a dependance upon the merit of that Saviour who has "made peace by the blood of his cross," and through whom it is that we receive the spirit of adoption, and are permitted to cry "Abba Father." But while no prayer, except a believing prayer, can at any time be effectual; there is a peculiar propriety in those who pray while they are afflicted, being "strong in faith." All our afflictions are so many proofs of our being sinners, and, as sinners, unworthy of the divine favor. Had there been no sin, there would have been no suffering. And therefore, when we suffer, we have, in the pain and sorrow we endure, an unequivocal demonstration that guilt attaches to us in the sight of God. Guilt and suffering being thus associated in our minds, surely we cannot reasonably pray that the latter may be removed or mitigated, while no method has been employed to expiate the former, or while we do not acknowledge the method of expiation which God has compassionately provided. If, therefore, there be a necessity for our appealing to the merit of the Redeemer, in order that our application for any boon, or mercy whatever, may be attended with success, the necessity becomes the stronger and more obvious, when that application refers to afflictions —every one of which, whether it be great or inconsiderable, reminds us of our disobedience and alienation from God, is a standing and impressive evidence that we can expect nothing on the footing of personal desert, and shuts us up conclusively and effectually, to the faith of Him through whom alone we can find acceptance, and obtain the blessings which our prayers implore. And while in this way there is a peculiar propriety in the prayer that we offer in reference to our afflictions, being that of faith, there is also a peculiar encouragement suggested by the same subject. Jesus Christ, in whom we trust for the efficacy of our peti-

tions, was a suffering Saviour: it was by suffering that he became perfect as the Author of our redemption; and it is because he suffered in our nature and in our stead, that he is now "exalted at the right hand of the Majesty on high," and that "he ever liveth to make intercession for us," and that we are promised "all things whatsoever we shall ask in prayer believing." When, therefore, we are required to put our confidence in him for attaining that comfort and support in affliction, or that deliverance from it, or that sanctified use of it, which we supplicate at the throne of grace, we are required to put our confidence in One who "bore our griefs and carried our sorrows"—who was "tempted in all things as we are"—who is "touched with a fellow-feeling of our infirmities," and whose advocacy, therefore, we may rest assured, will be quickened and invigorated, when it is employed to enforce those petitions which we offer up as the children of distress. In these circumstances, let us think devoutly of all that Jesus endured, while he tabernacled upon earth: let us remember that though the days of his mourning are long since ended, he has not forgotten the waves and the billows of adversity that went over him in the days of his flesh: let us bear in mind that the sympathies which he manifested in this world cannot have forsaken him in the better world into which he has entered: let us not cease, in all our thoughts of him, to associate closely and intimately his present mediation in our behalf, with his former suffering in our behalf: and when we cry to God from the midst of our troubles and trials, let it be with an unwavering and delighted confidence in the might, and in the compassion, and in the tenderness of our "Great High Priest who has passed into the heavens," and who there pleads our cause as earnestly and as affectionately as if it were his own.

4. In the fourth place, our prayer in the time of affliction, must be the prayer of holiness. The apostolic precept is, that, in all our addresses to God, we

"lift up holy hands." And the Psalmist has also said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me." To approach God in prayer, while conscious that we are enemies to him in our minds, and by the habitual course of our conduct, is to insult the purity and majesty of his character, and to court as well as to incur his indignation. While, therefore we go to him in the name of Christ, we should go to him also in the sanctification of the Spirit—repenting of our sins, and cherishing holy affections, and studying conformity to the image of him whom we profess to worship. And much more should this be the case, when we address ourselves to him as his afflicted offspring. Our afflictions, though not to be viewed as specific punishments for specific transgressions, are yet, agreeably to our former remark, to be regarded as tokens of God's displeasure against sin, and as significant intimations that he will be "sanctified of all them that draw near to him." When, therefore we draw near to him in affliction, it is the more indispensable that we do so with "clean hands and with pure hearts;" having "our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed as with pure water." But when I speak of our prayer in affliction being the prayer of holiness, I refer chiefly to the practical and ultimate end which we ought to have in view. "This is the will of God," when he lays upon us his chastening hand, "even our sanctification." And this is an object of vast importance. It is distinctly set before us as the object which all our sufferings are appointed, or overruled, to promote. And consequently, our prayer, when we are subjected to them, should point to it constantly and earnestly. We are apt to be contented with asking the removal, or the mitigation, of our trials, and to think that all is well when we obtain either the one or the other. But, alas! we have gained nothing that is substantially and permanently beneficial, unless they have been made instrumental in improving our principles and *our character; and unless* from our experience of a

sanctified result, we can say with truth, "it is good for us that we have been afflicted." Such effects as these, are precious in the sight of God; they are precious to us now, and they will be precious to us forever: whereas a mere deliverance from pain and misfortune, however immediate, and however complete, has no necessary bearing on the destiny of our souls, and is quite compatible with our continuance under "the curse of the law," and our endurance of the terrors of "the second death." Let us, therefore, keep continually in view the practical benefits which our afflictions may be the means of securing; and let us pray that we may derive from them all the advantage which they are fitted to confer. Let us pray that they may be sanctified for weaning us more and more from the world and from sin—for bringing us into a closer walk with God, and for rendering us more submissive to his will, and more active in his service. Let us pray that, though for the present, they may "not seem joyous but grievous," yet that, cost what it will to our tenderest feelings, they may work out for us the "peaceable fruits of righteousness." And finally, let us pray that they may have such an influence on our whole temper and our whole conduct, as to contribute to the cultivation of that character by which we may be qualified for the offices and the enjoyments of the sinless and unsuffering kingdom of our God and Saviour.

5. Lastly, our prayer in affliction must be the prayer of hope. Unless, indeed, we had hope that prayer would be attended with some benefit, we should scarcely think of engaging in it at all. At least, our engaging in it would, on the contrary supposition, be little else than obedience to arbitrary authority, and would speedily degenerate into cold and heartless formality. In order to keep alive the spirit of devotion, and to render our distresses motives instead of discouragements to it, we should keep in mind not only the blessings which are promised, but the grounds which are afforded for our confident expectation that every promise will be fulfilled,

and that nothing will be withheld which our real interest requires. Let us look to the character of Him to whom our afflicted hearts are lifted up in prayer. Let us listen to the gracious and animating declarations which he has given in his word on this subject. Let us remember the merit and the advocacy of his Son, through whom he condescends to regard and to hear us. Let us think of the love of his Spirit, who teaches us to pray as we ought, and who "makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." And let us remember the happy experience of his people in every age, who have fled to him in the season of their adversities, and been made glad at the throne of his mercy and in his house of prayer. All these things combine to show, that so far from having any reason to doubt of his lending a favorable ear to our requests and our complaints, we have irresistible inducements for anticipating the most compassionate treatment—for expecting to receive all that we ask and all that we need. Let us, therefore, pray in hope; and thus do homage to the grace and the faithfulness of him upon whom we call, and encourage ourselves to petition for a supply to our wants, as large and as liberal as their multitude, and their extent, and their complicated variety, may demand. Let us pray in the hope that God will "bind up our broken hearts," and "strengthen our feeble knees," and heal our wounded spirits; and that if he should not see meet to rescue us from the sorrows by which we are oppressed, he would give us strength to bear them with fortitude and patience. Let us pray in the hope, that, continuing us in the furnace of affliction, he will make the trial subservient to our spiritual purification and our moral advancement. And let us pray in the hope which looks beyond a present world—beyond all its joys and all its afflictions—which "enters into that within the vail"—and fixes its longing and delighted eye on "the rest that remaineth for the people of God," and on the recompense of those who have "come through much tribulation," and have entered into glory.

Thus praying, my Christian friends, in the season of affliction, the happiest consequences may reasonably, may confidently, be expected. There is in the exercise itself a direct and manifest tendency to produce beneficial effects, independently of any specific promises which God has annexed to it. It implies the recognition of God as that Being by whom our lot in the world is arranged, and to whose sovereign rule we ourselves, and all that we have, and all that can affect our feelings or our condition, are necessarily and unreservedly subject. It implies the serious contemplation of those attributes of his character, and of those ways of his providence, which are calculated to reconcile us to every thing that befals us, by assuring us of its gracious purpose, and of its final and glorious issue. It implies, in the various views, and meditations, and petitions with which it employs the mind, the union, equally soothing and sanctifying, of our severest sufferings, with whatever is elevating in faith, and excellent in conduct, and delightful in anticipation. It implies the assured and gratifying confidence with which, as the children of God, we pour all our fears, and anxieties, and distresses into the bosom of our heavenly Father; and repose our wearied and agitated hearts on the manifestation of his paternal character, and on the experience of his paternal love; and combine, in all the tenderness and in all the energy of filial affection, the faithful discipline to which he subjects us upon earth, with the holy and unfading inheritance which he has laid up for us in heaven.

And, while such is the native and blessed influence of prayer in the season of affliction, we are to recollect, that prayer is the instituted means of obtaining from God the grace that is necessary to support and comfort, to sanctify and deliver us. We have no title to look for any blessing from him, except through its instrumentality. But, if we engage in it in a proper spirit and in a proper manner, he is pledged by the wisdom of his plans and the consistency of his administration, to

grant us according to the voice of our petitions. He commands us to cry to him in the midst of our perplexities and sorrows; and supposing his commandment stood alone and unconnected with any promise, it would mean nothing less than that our cry would be kindly and compassionately regarded. But there is a promise, to give ardor to our supplications and comfort to our hearts—a promise that he will graciously hear us, and that he will send us an answer full of pity and beneficence. And though "all his promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus," yet if there be one of them on whose fulfilment we can count with certainty, it is that which, as "the Father of mercies and the God of all consolation," he holds out to his people, when they "call upon him in the time of trouble." He may not indeed, be pleased to give them those precise expressions of his regard, which they make the object of their request. They may have asked these in ignorance or in error, and it may be a part of the very mercy which they were imploring to withhold them for a time, or to withhold them altogether. But they may rest assured, that behind this cloud of grief and disappointment, there is a love which melts for their distresses—which is lending a compassionate ear to all their aspirations—which is silently, but effectually, guarding and protecting and blessing them—and which is minutely providing for them, and tenderly applying to them, every thing that is truly desirable, either as to their state of feeling under affliction, or as to their character upon earth, and their felicity in heaven.

Yes, my believing friends, when you were bowed down with sorrow, you went to the throne of grace, and in the spirit of humility and submission, and in the name of your merciful High Priest, you besought the Lord to interpose in your behalf, and you can bear the testimony of a blessed experience to the readiness with which he hears, and to the liberality with which he answers, his people, when they "cry unto him out of the depths." You were lightened by "casting your bur-

den upon Him who has promised "to sustain it." You received deeper impressions of those great and precious truths which he has revealed for the comfort of them that mourn. You heard, as it were, a voice from heaven speaking peace to your troubled mind. You felt yourselves soothed amidst the pains which harassed, and raised above the fears which agitated you. You obtained strength to bear with fortitude the trials with which you were visited, and to encounter with tranquillity the ills that were yet to beset your path: and were enabled not only to endure with patience, but even to "rejoice in tribulation;" to bless the name of the Lord, though he had taken from you your dearest earthly comforts; to mingle with the saddest notes of lamentation, the accents of gratitude and praise to him whose rod had smitten you; and to rise from your knees, cheered by what you had tasted of the grace of God, "encompassed with songs of deliverance," and animated by a more vigorous and more lively exercise of the hope that is full of immortality."

And if there be any to whom all this is rather an object of desire than a matter of experience; any who have been afflicted, and who have prayed and have not found the comfort, or the relief, or the benefit, which they asked and expected; and who are shedding tears which there is no hand to wipe away; who are "walking in darkness and have no light;" who are suffering and supplicating and suffering still; to such of you I would say, distrust not the promises of your God, nor the intercessions of your Saviour: "follow on to know the Lord," and you shall know him as "the Hearer of prayer," and as "a present help in the time of need;" wrestle, as did Jacob, with "the Angel of his presence:" be importunate with him as was the widow who "cried day and night;" and sooner or later, in one form or in another, you shall find, in the rest and comfort which are imparted to your soul, that he has not forgotten, but has been "waiting, to be gracious." And should you still be doomed to seek rest and not to find

it; should the earth be mourning under your feet, and the heaven above you be clothed with blackness, and should even the shades of death be closing in upon you, without any sensible communication of divine comfort, and without any distinct perception of the reasonableness and utility of your afflictions, notwithstanding a thousand and a thousand intreaties for light and deliverance, even then I would say to you,—"continue instant in prayer, still trust in God," still bend before his throne of mercy, and still cherish the hope that at length he will give you complete relief and everlasting consolation; that the prayers of suffering mortality shall ere long be converted into the anthems of unmingled praise; and that, in the unclouded light of heaven, you shall see the faithfulness of Him whose hand had here pressed so heavily on your spirit; and admire the wisdom and the mercy of that thorny way by which he had led you to your eternal home, and lift up the song of rapturous and never-ending gratitude to him for those very providences which here had well nigh overthrown your faith, and well nigh broken your heart.

But, what shall I say to those who are strangers to prayer; who habitually neglect this duty; and who, whether in joy or in sorrow, never devoutly look up to God, to thank him for the one, or to supplicate from him relief and comfort in the other? Ah! my friends, if you are not given to prayer; if prayer does not form a constituent part of your religious exercises; if you have not its spirit dwelling in you; and if it does not hold its due place in your character—you are not Christians, and cannot appropriate the promises, or look forward to the inheritance, unfolded in the gospel. You may call yourselves by what name you please; you may make the most specious professions before the world; you may sit down with great outward solemnity at the Lord's Table; and you may have the reputation, and even the reality, of much personal virtue and much active benevolence; but not praying to God who com-

mands you to pray to him—not making use of this appointed method of obtaining forgiveness, and sanctification, and eternal life; you must necessarily remain guilty and corrupted—children of wrath and heirs of hell. This is the conclusion that the word of God forces upon you, and from which no ingenuity can enable you to escape. And have you courage to rest in this conclusion? Are you prepared for enduring the gnawings of "the worm that never dies," and the torments of "the fire that is never quenched?" Are you ready to meet in judgment, and to bear through eternity, the vengeance of that God whose commandment you have disobeyed, and whose kindness you have set at nought? None of you, I trust, is so stout-hearted. "Arise, then, and call upon your God." "Seek him while he may be found, call upon him while he is near." Delay not till death has formed an impassable gulf between you and your Maker. You are now not far from the graves where the dust of many of your fathers, and your neighbors, and your friends, is reposing in awful and unbroken silence. And you know not how soon—you know not how suddenly—your dust shall be mingled with theirs. O then, improve this the "day of your merciful visitation"—and "harden not your hearts." Live no longer "without God in the world." Let it not be said of any one of you, when you are sleeping in the earth, "This is the grave of one who once had free access to the throne of grace, but never went to it—never bent his knees—never lifted up his eye to heaven—never uttered a devout petition—never conceived one cordial wish for the salvation of his soul. And now the ear of mercy is shut, and the power of addressing it is gone forever." O thoughtless and prayerless sinner, return unto Him whom you have forsaken, and away from whom you can have no comfort in distress, no happiness in life, no hope at the hour of dissolution. Return to him—return to him with your whole heart; return to him through Jesus Christ, who

e true and living way; and he will "receive you iously"—he will "love you freely"—he will put your heart "the spirit of grace and supplication"—vill guide you through the wilderness in which you now wandering with heedless steps; and he will at ;th conduct you into the land of promise and of nal rest.

SERMON XVI.*

THE PENITENT'S PRAYER.

JEREMIAH xvii. 14.

"*Save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved.*"

THESE are the words of a true penitent. It is probable that they were used by the Prophet, in reference to the persecutions in which he was involved, as a messenger of God, and a preacher of righteousness. But if they were rightly employed by him, when exposed to outward or partial dangers, with still greater propriety may they be employed by those who feel that they are subject to all the evils and perils which sin brings upon its votaries. And it is in this application that we propose to make them the subject of our present discourse.

I. In the first place, then, we may regard them as expressing a deep concern about salvation, and an earnest desire to obtain it.

Every man's real state as a sinner consists in his being under a sentence of condemnation and under the dominion of depravity; and in his being liable, in a

* Preached in St. George's Church, before the celebration of the Lord's Supper, on Sabbath, 5th November, 1825.

future world, to all the threatened and dreadful consequences of his violation of the divine law. This is the fact; though it often, alas! too often, happens that those with respect to whom it is most undeniably true, are either not aware of it, or not alive to it; and though continuing to be thus ignorant, or thus careless, they have nothing to expect but final and inevitable ruin.

All, however, are not so insensible to the horrors of their situation. There are some who have been awakened to a conviction of their sin and misery, who not merely acknowledge that they are transgressors, but are roused to a serious and alarming view both of the degradations and of the perils which are attached to that character, and who are oppressed by an overpowering perception, and a deep unconquerable feeling, of the helplessness and hopelessness of their fallen condition. In such circumstances there exists a strong and restless anxiety to be delivered from the evils with which their consciences are burdened, and from that everlasting destruction into which sin will ultimately plunge its victims, and which rises up before them as the fate to which they are justly doomed. Looking up to God, and beholding in him the Being whose will they have disobeyed, whose goodness they have despised, whose indignation they have provoked; looking forward to futurity, and realizing "the judgment of the great day," "the worm that never dies," and "the fire that never shall be quenched;" and calling to mind, and dwelling upon, the multitude of circumstances by which their guilt has been aggravated, and by which their punishment shall be increased; how dreadful the apprehensions by which they are agitated! how poignant their distress, how intense and vehement their desire for deliverance from the divine displeasure, and from "the wrath to come!"

But the true penitent is troubled not merely at the thought of condemnation; nor does he confine his longings to deliverance from it. The wrath to which he is exposed may be first and uppermost in his mind;

nor are we to wonder that for a season it should absorb every other consideration, and that it should never cease to occupy a large portion of his anxiety. But his views of salvation are much more enlarged. He adverts not merely to the greatest and most overwhelming of the calamities of which his sinfulness is productive—he regards every one of them with proportional concern, and is solicitous for its removal. He not only cherishes a lively aversion to all that stings him with remorse, or that fills him with alarm; he mourns also the loss of those positive blessings of which his apostacy has deprived him, and thirsts for their recovery. He limits not his attention to any one department of his sinful and miserable estate, nor treats the most inconsiderable portion of it with coldness or unconcern; he surveys it through all its variety and extent, and feels alive to all the fears it is fitted to create, and to all the pain it is fitted to inflict, and to all the solicitude it is fitted to awaken. And salvation, in its most comprehensive import, becomes the object of his intensest interest and of his fondest affection, as implying his emancipation from all that is most formidable, and his attainment of all that is most precious, to a fallen but immortal nature. The anxiety of which he is conscious is not merely to escape from hell; as if, escaping from hell, he were careless about his future destiny; he knows that he has lost heaven, the place of happiness and purity, for which he was originally formed, and which is worthy of his best ambition, and he is desirous to regain it. It is not merely to be relieved from the terror of God's anger, as if, would God but cease to frown on him, he were careless how God might regard him otherwise; but to be reconciled to him and to "walk in the light of his countenance," from the persuasion that this would be alike his honor and his joy. It is not merely to be restored to the favor of God, and to the hope of heaven, as if he would be satisfied to have these along with the gratification of still unmortified passions, and the possession of a still rebel-

lious heart; but to be renewed and purified as well as pardoned and accepted; to be rescued from the bondage of corruption, as well as from the curse of the law; to be introduced into the liberty of God's children, as well as made an heir of their inheritance; to be made fit for holding communion with God here, by the removal at once of guilt and of pollution, and to have this as a foretaste of that more perfect and blissful fellowship which his people are to maintain with him hereafter.

We do not say that all these views occur to the true penitent, at the very first stage of his transition, or that they ever occur to him in the precise and methodical order in which we have stated them. There may be a considerable indistinctness with regard to many particulars which have a place in his mind, and by which his mind is, notwithstanding, in no small degree affected. It may be long before certain points, even of material moment, come into his contemplation, or attract much of his notice, or strongly influence his heart. And all along the prevailing sentiment may frequently be an awful apprehension of God's vengeance against the sinner, and of the hazard in which he individually, as a sinner, stands, of falling into perdition. But though he must be chiefly occupied with the great leading features of his condition, as one who has incurred the penalty of hell, and forfeited his right to heaven; and though the contemplation of these is sufficient to stir up his soul to serious reflection and distressing anxiety on the subject of his personal salvation, yet he will not rest satisfied with any thing short of a full detailed consideration of all the mischiefs from which that salvation will free him, and of all the benefits to which it will restore him. And the longer and the more minutely he meditates upon these, the more importance will he attach to the salvation that he needs, the more necessary will he perceive it to be to his welfare, the more heartfelt will be his concern, and the more decided his desire to obtain it.

II. The true penitent being thus awakened to a sense of his need of salvation, and to unfeigned and anxious concern about obtaining it, he applies for it to Almighty God. "Save me, O Lord."

Before he was brought to think seriously of his situation, and to see his guilt and his danger, God was no more the object of his dependance, than he was the object of his veneration. He neither recognised Him as the ruler of his conduct, nor as the source of his blessings, but habitually disregarded him when he needed help, as he habitually disobeyed him, when passion prompted, or when temptation occurred. But now that his sinfulness, and the peril with which it threatens him, are brought home to his inmost conviction—now that he discovers an evil impending over him, which human skill and human strength are equally unable to avert—now that he is made aware of his absolute need of blessings which lie beyond his utmost reach—now that he feels himself so situated as that no resources of his own, no help from the mightiest of his fellow-men, nor even the interposition of the highest of created beings, can prevent him from falling into irretrievable ruin —he turns his eye to that God whom he has so long forgotten, and so much despised, and perceives in Him the grace and the power from which alone he can expect the salvation he requires.

This may be an immediate, or it may be a more tardy, result of his convictions of guilt and wretchedness as a transgressor; but sooner or later it is the consequence of these convictions, and forms the termination of his anxieties, and the resting place of his soul. Perhaps he obtains such a striking and impressive view of his miserable condition by sin, and is so overborne by a sense of his utter inability to do any thing for himself, and is so satisfied that he has nothing to hope for from the arm of created strength, and has been so much accustomed to hear God spoken of as merciful and omnipotent, and so willingly and readily believes all that the *scriptures* have declared respecting these attributes, and

withal so guided and determined by the teaching of the divine Spirit, who is with him in every step of his progress—that he is led at once and without hesitation to cast his regards towards Jehovah, and to trust in Him and in Him exclusively for salvation. Or it may not be till after various struggles and repeated disappointments—till he has tried to pacify his conscience by thinking lightly of his worst sins, and fondly of his seeming virtues—till he has thrown himself upon time or chance, or something else as vain and empty—it may not be till after such experiments as these to which the carnal mind is so apt to cling pertinaciously and perversely, that he looks to God as his only refuge, and turns to him as his strong hold in the midst of agitation and trouble. In this case, it is but gradually that the insufficiency of those helps to which he had recourse, is made apparent to him. One of them after another, he feels to be unsuitable and inadequate. He finds that he has nothing approaching to rest or peace, except in those moments when he is favored with a glimpse of divine compassion. And at last he turns his back on all "the refuges of lies" which had only deceived and perplexed him, and concludes the spiritual strife which wrought within him, by committing himself with hope and with confidence to the Lord his God.

At whatever period he is brought to this issue, he cannot but be convinced, that in it, and in no other, can he find deliverance and repose. It must be obvious to him that whatever else has invited his affiance, or promised him relief, has only been deluding him; for as it is against God that he has sinned, and to God that he is accountable, nothing can possibly screen him from the proper consequences of his guilt, which does not originate in the authoritative appointment and good pleasure of God. It is the peculiar prerogative of God to determine whether sinners shall be saved at all, and if so, by what means that operation of his sovereignty shall be accomplished, and to whom, amidst the multitude of transgressors, the high privilege shall be granted. When,

therefore, the awakened sinner turns away his thoughts and his reliance from God, he can experience nothing but failure and disappointment. And indeed, whenever he allows himself to look steadily at his mental inquietudes, he must be sensible that they all arise from a consciousness of having offended God; and thus the very circumstance which constitutes his need of deliverance, and makes him so anxious to obtain it, necessarily directs his view to God, as the only source from which it can be derived.

But the true penitent is not only so hedged in, that he must either apply to God, or perish in his iniquities; he is also persuaded to make that application, by the comfortable and encouraging representations of the divine character that are set before him in the gospel. This indeed is essential to his making that application, in a right spirit, and with ultimate success. Did he see nothing in the divine character but holiness to hate sin, and justice to award condemnation, and omnipotence to execute the sentence on the guilty, he could scarcely dare to address himself to the Being, of whom these attributes were the sole characteristics, for any redemption from his misery. This would be more like the effect of mad despair, than the expression of natural feeling, or of rational purpose, and could never be expected either to impart comfort, or to terminate in salvation. But the true penitent has been enabled to entertain more correct and honorable views of the perfections of God. God is indeed revealed to his mind as holy, and just, and powerful; but with these attributes the contemplation of which is so directly calculated to convince him of his perilous and miserable state as a sinner, there is conjoined the richest mercy, and the tenderest compassion, which forbid him to sink into despondency, or to regard himself as utterly abandoned to wretchedness. Nay, it is the knowledge that such mercy and compassion belong to God, and compunction for having aggravated his guilt by perseverance in sin, while such mercy and compassion were so often displayed before his eyes, and exer-

cised towards himself, that inflict upon his conscience the bitterest pangs he is now doomed to feel. In this way, the very occasion of his most poignant sorrow, and of his most dreadful anticipations, is also the occasion of his looking to God, and trusting in Him for salvation, by reminding him that He whose displeasure he has incurred, and whose wrath he has so much reason to fear, is no more relentless than he is unrighteous, and that notwithstanding all the provocations he has received from his apostate children, and all their contempt of his law, and ingratitude for his forbearance, he has not forgotten to pity them, and has not allowed their perverseness to quench his love, but has this for his unchangeable memorial, that he is "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and slow to anger, abundant in goodness and in truth." Nor does the true penitent rest contented with general impressions of God's compassion to sinners, and of his willingness to save them. He takes that nearer, and still more interesting, view of the subject which is afforded by the dispensation of the gospel. There God is revealed as not only declaring that he is ready to extend forgiveness to the guilty, but as embodying his declarations in a plan for their redemption—as giving his own Son to be a sacrifice of atonement for the sin of the world—as making every provision which unbounded goodness could dictate for the accomplishment of his benevolent design—as assuring us that Christ whom he has appointed to execute it, is commissioned to save even the chief of sinners—as affectionately inviting the most unworthy, and the most helpless to come to him by that "new and living way" which he has opened up for their approach, and as constraining them to accept of the invitation by the gracious assurance that he has "no pleasure in the death of the wicked," but would rather that they should "turn to him and live." And, to God revealed to him in this endearing light—to God in whom "mercy rejoiceth against judgment," and who has said and demonstrated that he *will not reject* even the guiltiest of our race that

comes to him through the appointed Mediator—it is impossible that the true penitent should look with any portion of indifference or distrust, or that he should go to Him with reluctance or with jealousy, or that he should not surrender himself to Him, in the humble but assured hope that He will be to him the rock of his salvation. The nature and exigency of his situation compel him to have recourse to God as alone able to deliver him. The divine mercy exhibited in the gospel encourages him to put his confidence in God, as perfectly willing to bestow the deliverance he is so anxious to attain. Every new proof that he discovers of God's kindness gives him a more forcible impression of the heinousness of his guilt and of the folly of his conduct, and shows him still more clearly how much he must lose by remaining in a state of alienation and impenitence, and thus adds a fresh and double impulse to the anxiety that he feels, and the desire that he cherishes, for pardon and reconciliation. It, therefore, becomes the spontaneous, and the predominant, and the continued out-going of his affections, "Save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved."

III. This leads me to observe, in the third place, that the true penitent applies to God for salvation through the medium of prayer, "Save me, O Lord."

In ordinary cases, if we be laboring under the pressure of any evil, and be acquainted with any individual who is both willing and able to remove it: Or, if we have trespassed against a fellow-mortal, whose displeasure we are anxious to turn away, and whose friendship we are anxious to regain, and on whose inclination to be reconciled we have reason to depend: In these, and in all similar instances, we invariably employ the language of petition—we ask what we wish to have, and what we believe there is a disposition to give. And he who in such circumstances should neglect that mode of attaining his object would be accounted foolish, or insincere, or inconsistent. In like manner, it cannot be supposed that the sinner should have his eyes open to see the awful hazard which encompasses him as a rebel against

heaven—that he should be full of the alarm which that object is so powerfully fitted to excite—that he should be truly desirous to escape from the destruction that is about to overtake him, and to obtain the blessings of pardon, and sanctification, and eternal life which stand opposed to it—that he should give full credit to God's testimony, and pay due homage to God's character when he provides, and promises, and offers to him all that can secure his safety and his happiness; and yet, that he should not beseech God to impart to him what he so absolutely needs, and what God is so ready to bestow. This cannot be supposed. It is quite unnatural. It never did happen, and it never can happen. Piety, in all its forms, and at all its stages, finds its utterance in prayer. And this is especially its utterance when connected with the experience of calamities that must be taken away, or of wants that must be supplied. The moment that the sinner feels the real burden of his transgressions, and is made fully sensible of his need of divine mercy, that moment he as naturally, and as necessarily, cries to God, for the requisite communications, as the hungry child craves bread from its bountiful parent, or as the condemned criminal supplicates pardon from his compassionate sovereign. A man may ask forgiveness, while destitute of the emotions and workings of genuine repentance. But that request is just as indispensable to the true penitent as any one feeling by which his heart is pervaded, or any one action by which his conduct is distinguished. If you can say of any sinner, "Behold he repenteth," you may say, at the same moment, and with equal certainty, "Behold he prayeth!"

And the penitent transgressor not only feels his heart naturally lifted up to God in prayer, when convinced that it is he "from whom cometh his aid;" he also applies in that way, in conformity to the divine institution. He knows that prayer is the appointed method of seeking for and obtaining the blessings of salvation. It is sanctioned and ordained by that very Being to whom he *is to be indebted for* "every good and perfect gift."

Disregarding it, he is aware that all his guilt will remain uncancelled, and all his spiritual necessities unsupplied. But employing it aright, he has the assurance that nothing shall be withheld which is essential to his welfare. He is too much humbled under the weight of his demerit—too much mortified by the folly and the waywardness of his past doings—too much shut up to a dependance on divine wisdom and divine bounty, for the deliverance for which he so deeply sighs, to have any disrelish for the ordinance by which his offended Maker has seen proper that he shall acknowledge his unworthiness and destitution, and procure those benefits to which he has otherwise no just title, and which must come to him from the Hearer of prayer, or not come at all. Far from objecting to it, he acquiesces in it with cheerfulness and gratitude. He regards it as a token of the condescension and kindness of his heavenly Father. He recognises in it a wise, as well as a merciful, adaptation to the feelings which animate him, and to the situation in which he stands. He feels that he is a criminal, self-condemned and self-abased, trembling, yet hoping, in the presence of that God who at once hates sin and pities the sinner. He is aware that his weakness, his blindness, his degeneracy, require that his intercourse with the Eternal shall pass through a channel so level to his apprehension and so suited to his case, as that of prayer and supplication. He, therefore, goes at once to the throne of grace; pours out the convictions, and confessions, and desires of a broken and contrite heart; makes all his requests known to God, who has declared that he will "regard the prayer of the destitute," and not despise it; and asks that he may receive "mercy to pardon him, and grace to help him in his time of need." "Save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved."

But while the true penitent prays for salvation it must not be forgotten that his prayer is the prayer of faith. It sometimes happens that sinners who are in some measure alarmed by a sense of their manifold trespasses, and by the threatenings of death and punishment which

the divine law denounces against them, do betake themselves to the mercy of God, and do entreat his forgiveness. But their notions of that mercy are vague, and unscriptural, and derogatory both to its nature and its perfection as a divine attribute; their entreaties for forgiveness therefore are destitute of that meaning, and of those accompaniments, without which they can neither be acceptable nor successful. They do not trust in God's mercy, as it is made known to them in his own revelation: they do not pray according to the instructions he has given, and in submission to the appointments he has made. It is not the salvation of the gospel of which they feel their need, or about which they are concerned; it is not the salvation of the gospel which they implore; and accordingly it is not the salvation of the gospel, which they can ever attain. They know not God, as a God of mercy, for they know not Christ, in whom alone he is merciful; and confiding in God, and applying to him for mercy, without reference to Christ, through whom alone it is either revealed or promised, they are as far from the forgiveness which they profess to aspire after, as if they had never passed one thought upon it, or uttered one petition for it. Very different, however, are the sentiments entertained, and the course pursued, by the true penitent, when he "cries out of the depths," "God, be merciful to me a sinner." No doubt this supplication is dictated by a sense of danger and a desire for safety; but it is accompanied with an enlightened view of the attributes of God, and of the manner in which God has been pleased to manifest his compassion to guilty men. He knows that it is for Christ's sake that the divine Being is willing to pardon and redeem, because it is only in that way that he can do so consistently with the honor of his character and his government; and therefore it is only in the name of Christ that he ventures to approach the divine presence, and only in reliance on the merits of Christ that he ventures to ask the blessings of forgiveness and acceptance. And, indeed, such now are his views of the

evil of sin, and such his regards towards the God to whom he addresses himself, that he would not think of asking any communication from him except on such terms as would maintain the divine authority inviolate, and the divine glory untarnished. Nor does he feel himself under any temptation to put up a single prayer that would in the least degree, or in any respect, demand such a sacrifice. In consequence of what Christ has done and suffered, in obedience to the will of God, and in behalf of perishing sinners, God is "rich in mercy and plenteous in redemption to all that call upon his name." There is nothing which they need, and which He may not dispense so as at once to satisfy them and glorify himself. And therefore the believing penitent draws near to Him, in the spirit and attitude of an humble, yet hoping, suppliant; and in the exercise of that faith which embraces in one view the grace of God and the righteousness of the Redeemer, breathes forth the petitions of his heart in the language of the prophet, "Save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved."

IV. In the fourth and last place, the language of the text expresses the confidence which the true penitent feels, that if the salvation which he asks be granted, it will be altogether such as his circumstances require, and such as will more than gratify his utmost wishes.

The phraseology is peculiar, and its peculiarity gives it an emphasis far beyond what its literal meaning possesses. It is as if the penitent said to God whom he is addressing, "Were any other being to undertake my salvation, I should not be saved. There would be some imperfection in the achievement. It would have the appearance, without the reality, of being efficient. It would be an attempt, but not attended with success. It would be something that offered and promised, and tried, and seemed, to deliver me; and after all, left me to perish. But if thou thyself save me, I shall be saved indeed. There will be no defect in any one particular by which my fate can be affected. There will be no feebleness in the purpose; no inadequacy in the power;

no deficiency in the means; no failure in the result. The perfection of thy nature must reign in all thy works; and that provides a security that nothing can occur to frustrate or to impair the work of my salvation."

This may not be precisely the language, but it is the sentiment of every believing penitent. It is dictated by the first distinct view that he obtains of God as a Saviour; and the longer that he meditates on the attributes of God, and on the declarations of his word, and on the method of redemption, the more is he satisfied that, if what he asks be vouchsafed, there will be nothing left for him to deprecate on the one hand, or to desire on the other. And if, in some gloomy moment, any doubt or distrust should steal into his mind, it is banished by the next survey that he takes of the power and the mercy to which he has committed the fortunes of his soul, and he again returns to the unsuspecting and heartfelt assurance with which he presented that expressive prayer, "Save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved."

It is impossible to estimate fully the value of that salvation which cometh from the Lord, without an exact attention to all the blessings of which it consists, and all the properties by which it is distinguished. The simplest view, indeed, that can be taken of it, is sufficient to show that it is worthy of our most intense anxiety, of our most ardent ambition, of our most fervent supplications. But it is just in proportion as it is unfolded to our contemplation, or as it comes to be a matter of experience, that we shall feel the mixed sentiment of desire to possess it, and of confidence that, when possessed, it will prove a satisfying portion, which is intimated in the phraseology of the text. And it is only in heaven—when we shall have left behind us all darkness, and doubt, and fear—when we shall be freed from the temptations without, and the corruptions within, which here annoy and endanger us—when the sentence of acquittal shall have been openly and audi-

bly pronounced upon us from the throne of final retribution—when we shall behold the face of a reconciled God beaming upon us, and no consciousness of guilt shall arise in our minds to obscure its brightness—when we shall be in the presence of that Saviour who shall then have actually brought us out of all our perils and tribulations, that we may dwell in his unsuffering kingdom, and sit down with him on his exalted throne—when sin and sorrow shall be recollected as the things of old, and the recollection of them shall be either absorbed in the possession of a purity that is unspotted, and of a joy that is unspeakable, or made by contrast to enhance our bliss, and animate our hymn of praise; it is only in heaven that we can understand the full meaning of this language which the penitent uses, respecting the salvation which he supplicates from the Lord, because it is there only that we can have the conscious, and delightful, and unchangeable feeling of being perfectly safe, perfectly holy, and perfectly happy.

But to us that land of vision is only in prospect, the salvation which dwells in it is only the object of anticipation. We are yet in the wilderness, where there are enemies to assail us, and allurements to lead us astray, and difficulties to perplex and bewilder our thoughts, and sins to burden our conscience, and disturb our tranquillity, and many evils to remind us that we are still in a state of trial, and must still expect to have much to do, and much to suffer. Even here, however, amidst all that bedims our views, impairs our comfort, and endangers our well-being, we are permitted to see the salvation prepared for us, and conferred upon us, in such a light as fully to satisfy our minds of its infinite excellence, and its unbounded sufficiency. And the true penitent who, when he is first roused to a conviction of his sin and misery, and thinks of little else than the ruin which is about to overwhelm him, appropriately exclaims, "Lord save me, else I perish," may, with still more propriety, after the first agitations of his spirits are soothed, and he has considered more

maturely all the extent of deliverance that he needs, all the felicity of which his nature is capable, and all the provision which God, in the riches of his grace and wisdom, has made for securing both the one and the other, send up the fervent prayer, and with it the proffer of his undoubting confidence, "Save me, O Lord, and I shall be saved."

He who has turned to the Lord by penitence and prayer, who goes to him by the pathway that he has marked out and consecrated, and beseeches him for all that is agreeable to divinity to give, and necessary for humanity to receive for its recovery and happiness, may expect a salvation to whose value no limits can be affixed, either by the reason or the imagination of man. It is incomparably more important and precious than any salvation that can be wrought out for his bodily frame, or for his outward estate: it embraces the interests of his never-dying soul, and affects his destinies in the world of righteous retribution—rescuing the one from the thraldom of guilt and moral pollution, and shedding upon the other the light and the glories of an endless life. It has enstamped upon it the features of truth and certainty; it is not a mere picture of the fancy, which, when grasped at by the sinner, mocks his aim and vanishes away, but a real substance which he can lay hold of, and appropriate, and feel to be the very thing which he desired; and it is not what may be given or withheld according to the suggestions of humor and caprice, but the subject of God's promise, and the purchase of Christ's blood, and therefore as surely to be bestowed as there are honor and veracity in the divine character. It is complete;—affording the sinner not a partial, but a total, relief—not conveying to him some blessings, but every blessing with which his nature and condition are susceptible—not marring his happiness by leaving some spiritual malady unremedied, or some spiritual want unsupplied, but providing liberally, and skilfully, and minutely, for the perfect cure of all the diseases with which he is afflicted, and

for the perfect relief of all the necessities with which he is burdened, so that he is redeemed from the endurance of every evil, and blessed with the enjoyment of every good, either in present experience, or in future and secure reversion. And, moreover, it is permanent; not to be possessed for a limited period, and then perhaps wrested from him, as that to which his title is doubtful, or which violence may take away, but to be held by a tenure which the creature cannot, and which the Creator will not dissolve. It is God, holy and true, who has given it to him, and called him to be a partaker of it; and "the gifts and callings of God are without repentance." It implies deliverance from the condemning sentence of the law; and those who are thus justified, we are assured, "can never come into condemnation." It implies exemption from the power of sin; and sin, we are told, shall "no more have dominion" over such as divine grace has rescued from its captivity. It implies restoration to the favor of God; and to all who are admitted to this privilege, its Author certifies that, according to the terms of the sure and well-ordered covenant, "his mercy and his kindness to them will be everlasting." It implies redemption from death and the grave; and it is proclaimed to every one who is to be thus redeemed, that "the grave shall be destroyed, and that death shall be swallowed up in victory." In fine, it implies admission into the heavenly world; and it is recorded in that word which is inspired to support our faith, and to animate our hopes, that they who enter that happy region shall "go out of it no more forever," that the light which there shines upon them shall never be extinguished, that the life which there animates them shall never come to an end, that the crown of glory which there encircles their heads, is "a crown of glory that fadeth not away."

Such are the characteristic properties of that salvation which the true penitent has in his eye, when he puts forth the petition in the text. Its intrinsic worth, and the attributes of Him from whom he expects to

eive it, give earnestness and energy to the prayer ich he prefers for it. And this is his consolation idst the sins and the sorrows which prompt his appli- ion, and this is his encouragement to make the request wn to God, and to urge it before his throne, that sking he shall receive, seeking he shall find, knock- it shall be opened to him." The same power ich quickens him into penitence, and suggests the ieving supplication in which that penitence ascends heaven, secures for it a gracious reception, and ngs down an answer in peace. And he almost speaks language of piety and experience combined, when says, in the language of the prophet, "Save me, O rd, and I shall be saved."

Now, my friends, let me ask you if you have ever ferred this petition. If you have, then yours is the racter in which the Lord delights, yours the prayers ich he has promised to answer, and for you all the vileges of his table are provided. But if not, it must concluded that repentance is a stranger to your minds that you have not seen the evil of your ways—that are not afraid or distressed on account of your sgressions—or that you are indifferent alike to the sequences of guilt, and to the blessings of salvation. d if you are thus impenitent, you are unfit for the le of the Lord, where are exhibited the memorials those sufferings which Christ endured to redeem you m your iniquities. It is not our prerogative to see the heart, and we cannot prevent you from pro- ing the ordinance, and injuring your own souls. t we can warn you of the sinfulness and the danger your conduct; and this warning we now give you, eeching you to remember that God's all-seeing eye pon you—that if there be any truth in the Bible, l any worth in the communion service, you are pro- king him to anger which may not soon be turned ay—that though admitted to a participation of the morials of that sacrifice which taketh away the sin the world, your sins remain upon your head,—and

that persevering in impenitence and unbelief, there will be no admission for you when you die, into the kingdom of heaven. Repent, therefore, and believe the gospel. Think upon your ways which have not been good; and turn unto the Lord, crying to him in the language and in the spirit of the penitent, "Save me, O God, and I shall be saved."

EXHORTATION AFTER THE COMMUNION.

My friends, the solemn service of communion is now concluded. And it surely becomes you to reflect on the conduct you have maintained, and on the experience you have had, as partakers of the Lord's Supper. You may, perhaps, imagine, that, the service being over, your duty is done, and any farther anxiety or trouble is unnecessary. But in this you are mistaken—and the mistake which you commit is one into which those who feel rightly, and think seriously, on the subject of religion, will not be apt to fall, or at least are not likely to continue. It is possible, on the one hand, that your mode of communicating was worthy—that you did it in faith and love, with grateful affections, and with holy dispositions—and that you thus honored the Saviour whom you professed to remember. I hope and trust that this was the case with many of you. And is it not proper that you should be sensible of it, so that you may not only enjoy the "testimony of a good conscience," but perceive the obligations under which you lie to that God who so prepared and guided you, and render to him that tribute of thanksgiving which you owe him for the influences of his grace? It is possible, on the other hand, that you have not partaken worthily of the memo-

rials of Christ's death—that you came to the ordinance without the requisite meetness—that you were actuated by improper motives—and that you profaned the service, by a worldly and unsanctified spirit. Then, surely, it is of the highest moment that you should know this, in order that you may see the guilt you have contracted, and the danger to which you are exposed—that you may repent of you sin, and apply for its forgiveness—and that, in future, you may be more diligent in using the means of preparation, and more devout and spiritual in your attendance at the table of the Lord. Nay, but even though, by the grace of God, you have "kept the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth," and though you have reason to be thankful that you were enabled to present your offering with "a pure heart and with faith unfeigned," yet is there not reason to believe that sins and imperfections mingled with your service? And should not you study to become acquainted with the defects which have thus adhered to you amidst your best endeavors and your warmest piety, that you may see the necessity of being clothed at all times with the grace of humility—of still cleaving close to that Redeemer, without whom your purest observances cannot be accepted—and of asking, with more earnestness than ever, the cleansing influences of the Spirit of God?

But we alluded not only to the conduct you may have maintained—we also referred to the experience you may have had. You may have been comforted and benefitted by engaging in the ordinance of the Supper. Your doubts may have been removed—your fears may have been dispelled—your mourning may have been turned into joy—your faith may have been confirmed—your hope may have been enlivened—and you may have abundant reason to say, "It has indeed been a good thing for us to draw near to God. He has not only brought us to his banqueting house, but his banner over us has been love. We have tasted that he is gracious." Is this what you have in any

measure felt? And would you, or can you, think of it no longer than during the short season of communion? O no; you must see it to be your duty, and it cannot fail to be your inclination and your pleasure, to recal to your fondest recollection those tokens of the divine mercy in which your hearts have been permitted to rejoice, that thus the flame of gratitude may be kindled in your souls—that you may be encouraged in time to come to wait upon the Lord in his sanctuary and at his table—that you may bear a willing testimony to the goodness which he manifests to his people—and that you may furnish yourselves with the most persuasive of all arguments, and the most endearing of all motives, for loving him with increased affection, and serving him with redoubled zeal.

But it may be that your experience has been the very reverse of what we have now supposed—that you have been conscious of enjoying no satisfaction, and of deriving no advantage, from the exercises of communion—that the darkness which overshadowed your views has not been dissipated—that your tears of sorrow have not been wiped away—that no word of peace has been spoken to your troubled mind—that the hopes of comfort and delight which you had cherished have been sadly disappointed, and that you have reason to lament an absent Saviour and an absent God. Well, my friends, and can it be right that you should be insensible to all this, and that you should forget it all? Or rather, should not it be the subject of your deep and solemn meditation? And while you mourn over the melancholy fact, should not you be anxious to search into its cause, to discover why it is that God has been contending with you and hiding his face from you, to ascertain whether it has been owing to your extravagant expectations, or to mistaken views of religion, or to the want of due preparation, or to some defect in your faith, or in your humility, or in your prayers, that you have not found him whom you were seeking, and have come away disconsolate from the Lord's table? Should

not you be anxious to know these things, that you may not be tempted to "charge God foolishly," that you may become acquainted with those failings which most easily beset you, that you may put away from you the evil thing which has poisoned your "cup of blessing," and that you may see more clearly how you ought to walk, so as to please God and to have your joy full, when you approach him again in the commemoration of your Saviour's death?

There is another circumstance which may have marked your experience, and of which it would be unsafe for you to remain ignorant. You may have had such feelings as would lead you to conclude that all is well, and to give God thanks; whereas, if strictly investigated, this may be found little better than a delusion. The outward service itself is so solemn as to impress almost any mind that is even but contemplating it at a distance; and you may have mistaken the solemnity derived from the sacredness of the external scene for the workings of genuine piety. The sufferings of Christ have been represented to you by the most affecting symbols, and perhaps described to you in the most pathetic language, and you may have considered the emotions of natural sensibility, and of natural tendency excited by these as satisfactory indications of love to the Saviour, and of an interest in his death, and of sorrow for the sins which brought him to the cross. The comforts of the gospel have been unfolded to you, and its hopes have been set before you in all the richness, and in all the confidence which they derive from the death and resurrection and promises of the second coming of the Son of God; and without reflecting on the inseparable connexion between character and privilege, you may have been consoling your hearts with truths to which you have no real attachment, and of which you have never felt the sanctifying influence; you may have been appropriating to yourselves assurances of pardon and of salvation which could only be intended for persons of far different prin-

ciples, and of far different conduct; and you may have been rejoicing in the prospect of that heavenly happiness for which you are not prepared, and into which, while you continue what you are, you can never enter. You may have been like those who listen with profound attention and lively interest to an eloquent preacher, and think themselves profited by his discourse, though it has been to them nothing more than "as a very lovely song of one who hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument." Or you may have resembled some who, though walking daily without God in their thoughts, and without holiness in their lives, yet, because they have been soothed into tranquillity, or elevated into rapture, by a fine piece of sacred music, have regarded it as at once the proof and the auxiliary of their devotion. And is this a deception which you would wish to practise on yourselves, or in which it is consistent with your best interests to remain? No, surely: convinced that you are liable to it, you will be anxious to discover and to avoid it; to know how far it is holding its mischievous dominion over you; and to distinguish between the operation of spiritual views and Christian feelings, and those affections of the animal nature, and those workings of a barren sentimentality, and that presumptuous confidence in your well-being which have no alliance with true religion, while they are perfectly at one with the carnal mind, which is "enmity against God."

I have to mention still another circumstance which may perhaps have distinguished your experience on this occasion. Some of you may have partaken of the ordinance without any consciousness of attention to its meaning, and without any lively sense of the truths and the blessings which it represents—without any desire or any aversion, any hope or any fear, any comfort or any uneasiness, any joy or any sorrow—allowing it to glide over your minds with perfect calmness—and to make no impression and to leave none that is worthy of a moment's recollection. Such a state of insensibility, I

need not tell you, betokens much that is sinful, and much that is perilous. No state, indeed, can easily partake more, either of the one or of the other. And unquestionably it is of high importance that you detect insensibility, if it has really existed—that you ascertain in what degree you have been indifferent to the spirit of your Saviour's last injunction, and dead to the riches and the glory of that event which it commemorates—to all the consolations which it imparts, and to all the hopes which it inspires.

I have stated these things, my friends, for your serious consideration. I have not, indeed, stated all the possible features of your conduct, nor all the possible incidents of your experience, nor all the various modifications and degrees of which these are susceptible. But I have stated enough to show you the importance and necessity of ascertaining what you have really done, and how you have really felt, at the table of the Lord: and these things you must be desirous to ascertain, unless you are prepared to say that your religious deportment and your spiritual condition are matters of less moment than the every-day occurrences of life—and that, in whatever light they may appear in the eye of God, the knowledge of them need not be to you a subject of any anxiety or concern.—Now that your knowledge of them may be certain and accurate and complete, it is obviously requisite that you examine yourselves—that you look back with a searching eye on the part you have acted—that you reflect minutely and maturely on the thoughts which have passed through your minds, and on the feelings which have been awakened and cherished in your hearts. Conduct your inquiry with serious intentions, with godly jealousy, with strict impartiality, with constant and humble reference to your Bible, and with prayer to God for the enlightening and heart-searching influences of his Holy Spirit. And let your determination be fixed, that whatever be the result of this retrospect, you will act according to it,—that while you humbly and gratefully appropriate all the

comfort of which it may be productive, you will, at the same time, study to supply all the defects which it may point out, and repent of all the sins with which it may charge you, and cultivate the graces of Christianity, with all the renovated zeal and vigor to which it may be the means of calling and urging you. And thus the exercise of self-examination, in which I am now exhorting you to engage, will, by the blessing of God, prove instrumental not only in making you more worthy as communicants on every coming opportunity that may be afforded you of remembering the Saviour in the ordinance of the Supper, but also in improving you as to the whole of your Christian character, in conducting you along the path of duty, and in preparing you for the joy of your Lord.

And this leads me to offer you a few exhortations respecting the deportment which it will become you to observe, and to exhibit in the path of life. That, of course, must bear a direct reference to what you have done and to what you have witnessed at a communion table. There ought, unquestionably, to be a strict and evident correspondence between the two. This is what is to be expected in the judgment of propriety, in the judgment of your Christian brethren, and in the judgment of the world itself. And if you do not realize these expectations, you demonstrate that your professions at the Lord's table were not sincere, and that, so far as you are concerned, the Lord's Supper is not a means of improvement—and thus you not only expose your own inconsistency and endanger your own souls, but do what in you lies to discredit the ordinance of communion, and to injure the authority and the influence of religion among your fellow-men. Far be such unhallowed conduct from you, my friends: but study to walk worthy of the profession you have made, and of the privilege you have enjoyed; and at every step you take in life, call to your remembrance the solemnity, and the import, and the lessons, of this day's service.

You have declared your faith in the blood of atonement. You have not merely commemorated the death of Christ, but intimated, in the most impressive manner, your entire dependance upon the merits of that death for taking away your sins, and reconciling you to God, and securing you a title to heaven. See, then, that you do not abandon this foundation of your hope. Continue to look to the great sacrifice which your High Priest offered upon Calvary for the blessings of salvation. And instead of listening to the suggestions of pride, or to the dictates of a false philosophy, or to the scorn of an unthinking and ungodly world, which would call you to be ashamed of your Redeemer's cross, and to count it foolishness, let it be the object of your cordial and your stedfast attachment: be bold to avow your adherence to it as your glory and your joy; and never cease to confess Him who suffered on it as your only Saviour and your only Lord.

At the Lord's table you have seen the evil of sin—you have seen its evil to be incalculable and infinite: for you have contemplated the sufferings of Christ as endured to take away sin; and had not its intrinsic turpitude and its miserable consequences been inconceivably great—had it not been thus boundlessly hateful and destructive in the estimation of God himself,—we can not suppose that he would have required the incarnation and the death of his own beloved Son for its expiation. Now, having had this striking view of the odious nature and ruinous effects of sin, let it be the object of your deep and unqualified and growing detestation. Fly from its pollutions as from a deadly pestilence. Give not up to its dominion any one of your affections. Deny yourselves resolutely to all the allurements by which it would seduce you from your Saviour and your God. Pray without ceasing for that Spirit who is promised to renew your hearts, and to sanctify you wholly. And amidst all the temptations that will beset you as you travel along the path of life, still look to sin as it appears in the light of the cross, that you may see

what a bitter and pernicious thing it is,—that you may never be reconciled to the commission of it—that you may behold it stripped of all its blandishments and disguises—that you may shudder at the very thought of crucifying the Lord of glory afresh, and putting him to an open shame.

At the Lord's table you have been favored with an astonishing display of the love of God. God was there acknowledged as taking compassion on you in your sinful and ruined state, and as giving up his only begotten Son for your eternal redemption. Such love as this "passes all understanding" and demands from you every return that you can possibly make to him by whom it has been manifested. It requires not merely that you shall indulge in admiration—or that your hearts shall be warmed with gratitude—or that you shall make professions of reciprocal affection. All these are due; but they are not sufficient. If the love of God which you have been contemplating at the Lord's table have its full and proper effect, it will constrain you to love him who has "first loved you," and to love him with all your heart and with all your soul. Now "this is the love of God, that ye keep his commandments." Having that sentiment shed abroad in your hearts by the power of the Holy Ghost, and cherished by the remembrances and the meditations of a communion service, see that it determine you to do those things which are pleasing to your God and Redeemer, to study an universal conformity to his will, to be "fruitful in every good word and work."

At the Lord's table you have been contemplating Christ as a compassionate as well as a powerful Saviour, who is touched with a feeling of your infirmities, and is both able and willing to supply all your spiritual wants. Carry this view of him with you into the world. There you are to meet with trials, and difficulties, and distresses of various kinds; but amidst them all let it be your constant care and your constant practice to have recourse to Him, to trust in his grace, to lean upon his

strength, to apply for his direction, and to drink of those waters of consolation which he has provided for the refreshment and the life of his people.

At the table of the Lord you have seen Christ as the conqueror of death, and have had your views directed to his second coming. O yes, my friends, by that very death, with all its accompaniments of ignominy and of pain, which you have been showing forth, Christ overcame death—he plucked out its sting—he disarmed it of its terrors—he "abolished" it—and secured a glorious resurrection and everlasting life to all who believe in his name. Bear about with you, therefore, "the dying of the Lord Jesus," so that not only his "life may be manifest in your mortal bodies," but that you may be fearless in encountering the last enemy, and be "made more than conquerors, through him that hath loved you." Interesting, indeed, and awful is that period when your bodies shall return to the dust from which they were taken, and your spirits unto God who gave them. And how many are there who, through fear of that solemn event, are "all their lifetime subject to bondage!" But, believing communicants, "let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid." He whose crucifixion you have been keeping in remembrance, is now reigning in heaven. He is saying to you, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold! I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of hell and of death." He requires you to commemorate his death, in the anticipation of his coming the second time, to deliver you from the dishonors of the grave, and to raise you to the enjoyment of eternal life. And, you cannot doubt that he is faithful and mighty to accomplish all the promises in which he bids you now rejoice. Look forward, then, to the hour of dissolution with the hope which has been kindled at the table of communion, and which will enlighten the gloom which nature and guilt have spread over the grave; and let this blessed ordinance encourage you to pray with more fervor, and to labor with more diligence, that you may

be counted worthy as "children of the resurrection," and as heirs of immortality.

I am unwilling to detain you longer, my friends, but I cannot conclude without addressing a few words, in particular, to those who have for the first time remembered Christ at a communion table. The step which you have taken, my young friends, is most important. Your situation is truly interesting. And while we offer up our earnest prayers to God in your behalf, we would speak to you the word of affectionate counsel and exhortation. You have been admitted to the holy ordinance of the supper, and I trust you have engaged in it from worthy motives, and with suitable dispositions. But, O remember that such a service, however becoming in itself, and with whatever decency you have observed it, is of no avail, if your heart and character be not at the same time adorned with the substantial graces of Christianity. You may have the credit of a good profession—every Sabbath may find you in the house of God, and every communion after this at the table of the Lord—and of your knowledge of the Scriptures we may have no doubt, and of your reputation we may be able to say nothing that is unfavorable, yet if, with all this, you be not conscious of a renewed mind, and if you be not cherishing the spirit of real personal religion, every thing that you have of outward sanctity is but as "sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal." Let me beseech you, then, not to rest satisfied with the mere name and appearance of communicants. This will never do in the sight of God, and it will never carry you to heaven. Be it your great concern to be Christians in deed and in truth—to experience the power of the gospel—to possess in reality that faith, and love, and penitence, and purity which you were presumed to have when you were permitted to "take the cup of salvation into your hand, and to call on the name of the Lord." Beware of acting inconsistently with the character you have assumed, and the vows that you have made. Be steady in your attachment to the great and

merciful Redeemer. Persevere in the path of righteousness in which he has commanded, and you yourselves have engaged to walk. And show, by the excellence of your whole deportment, that you "have been with Jesus," and that you have learned of Him who was "holy, and harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners." In the world to which you are now to return, you will meet with many trials and temptations. O it is a vain and wicked, a deceitful and ensnaring world; and if you surrender yourselves to its dominion, or conform to its maxims and its manners, it will speedily efface every serious impression from your minds, and carry you back to the pollutions from which you had escaped, and make your last state worse than the first. Fly, then, from those scenes of vain amusement—taste not of those unhallowed pleasures—be not entangled by those sordid pursuits by which it would steal away your affections from him who loved you to the death, and make you forfeit the glories of an immortal crown. Say not that this is hard doctrine: it is a doctrine whose truth you this day acknowledged, in the exercise of faith and gratitude, when you drank the memorial of that blood, which was shed upon the cross to redeem you from the power, and the conversation, and the bondage of this present evil world. Listen not to those who will tell you that this is melancholy advice—that it is unsuitable to your period of life—that you need not be afraid to mingle, as they do, in all the gaieties of fashion, and, like them, to forget your cares and your sorrows for a season in the gratifications of sense and of time. They who address to you such delusive language feel not for your spiritual well-being—they have learned nothing in the school of Christ—they have never been at the foot of the cross—they are themselves walking "in the broad way that leadeth to destruction," and would have you to be the companions of their guilt and of their ruin. But from counsel and examples like theirs, you must turn away; and to all their solicitations you may reply, by asking if they will die for you, and

if they will answer for you on the judgment of the great day. No, my young friends, listen not to them—but listén to your Saviour, who says, "love not the world," and who moreover calls you "to glory and to virtue." Consider what he suffered to raise your views and your hopes from earth to heaven. And remember all your obligations to "set your affections on those things which are above, where he now sitteth at the right hand of God." Young though you be, yet recollect the shortness and uncertainty of life, and pass through the wilderness as strangers and pilgrims and travellers to a better country. Anticipate the hour of your departure. Keep eternity constantly in your view. And let the prospect of the future, as well as the remembrance of the past, make you stedfast in the faith, and diligent in the work of the Lord. And, conscious of your own weakness, lean upon that Almighty arm of your Redeemer. Pray for the grace that you need. And let "the hope which entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for you entered," cheer you amidst all the distresses, and animate you amidst all the labors of your Christian pilgrimage.

"Now, unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen."

SERMON XVII.

SPIRITUAL DISEASE AND ITS REMEDY.

JEREMIAH viii. 22.

"*Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?*

THESE words originally referred to the desolation and misery brought by the Chaldean invasion upon the Jews, on account of their wickedness and impenitence. But they may, with great propriety, be applied to all whose conduct and circumstances resemble those of the degenerate house of Israel. And it is in this application that we intend to consider them. The prophet, looking to the sinfulness of his countrymen—to their obstinate disobedience—and to the judgments which impended over them, exclaimed, "Is there no balm in Gilead? Is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" And well may we put the same question, when, casting our eyes around us, we see so many in a state of guilt; perversely and pertinaciously continuing in it, in spite of all that has been done for their deliverance, and con-

sequently exposed to the indignation of God, and to punishment throughout eternity.

I. The first thing to which our attention is here called, is the melancholy fact that sin prevails.

Sin is here, as in other places of Scripture, represented under the figurative character of a disease. And the representation is appropriate and striking; for sin affects the soul much in the same way as disease affects the body—producing similar disquietudes, and leading to similar consequences. It is a derangement of the spiritual frame, by which its functions are impeded, its strength enfeebled, its comfort impaired, its proper ends counteracted, and its very existence, as a creature destined to immortal felicity, endangered or destroyed. And every view which can be taken of its nature, and extent, and tendency, demonstrates it to be a just cause of serious interest and alarm to all who are infected with it.

It is a hereditary disease—not induced by outward or accidental circumstances, but entailed upon us as an attribute of our fallen nature, and cleaving to us with as much tenacity as if it were a part of our original being: —we are "conceived, and shapen, and born in sin."

It is a pervading disease—not limited to any one portion of our constitution, but dwelling in every department of it—influencing its intellectual powers, its moral dispositions, its sensitive organs: "the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint."

It is a vital and inveterate disease—not touching merely the extreme or superficial parts of our system, and resisted in its progress by any inherent energies—but corrupting and preying upon our inmost soul, and so congenial to all that is within, and to all that is around us, as to grow with our growth, and strengthen with our strength.

It is a deceitful disease—not always accompanied with those violent and decided symptoms which forbid us to mistake the nature or disregard the perils of our condition—but often assuming that gentle form which

allays our apprehensions, and flatters us with hopes of recovery.

It is often withal a painful and harassing disease—filling us with dissatisfaction and fear and trembling—rendering our days gloomy and our nights restless—or piercing us with agonies to which we can find neither utterance nor relief.

And, finally, it is a mortal disease—not inflicting upon us a momentary pang, and then giving place to renovated vigor—but mocking at all human attempts to throw it off—sooner or later subduing us by its resistless power—and consigning us to the pains and the terrors of the second death.

Now, my friends, this disease of sin more or less prevails in every one of us: "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." All of us have it by nature, and all of us have it by practice. So that whatever is loathsome, or distressing, or fatal in it, must be regarded as attaching to every one of the children of men without exception. This is the real and unquestionable fact with respect to each one of you now hearing me. Whatever be the age at which you have arrived—whatever be your rank or condition in life—whatever be the opinion which you entertain of yourselves—or whatever be the estimation in which you are held by others—one and all of you are afflicted with the malady of sin. You may exhibit such appearances as shall render it a matter of difficulty to detect it; but nevertheless, it exists, and operates, and in some shape or other manifests itself to the observer's eye. You may fondly imagine that, however much it may reign in those around you, it has acquired no ascendancy in your minds, and that you need to apprehend no danger from it—but this is nothing better than a vain delusion, and so far from proving that you are without sin, shows only that the disease in your case has assumed one of its most alarming forms, and that it is taking advantage of your insensibility to accomplish your ruin. You may impose upon us, and you may impose upon yourselves,

by putting forth, in more than ordinary abundance, the tokens of spiritual health; and yet we must declare, for it is a truth asserted by him who knows all things and cannot be deceived, that the leprosy of sin is upon your souls—that they cannot prosper while it is there —and that, if it be not taken away, they must die forever.

Such, my friends, is the fact. But then, are you convinced of it? Do you acknowledge it? Or if you do, are you sincere in the acknowledgment which you make? I fear that there are too many of whom this cannot be said with truth. For if they were convinced of it, and if they did acknowledge it in sincerity, it is impossible that they should speak and act with such indifference as they show to what is so virulent in its nature, so terrible in its aspect, and so desolating in its effects. We should expect to see them as anxious at least to get quit of this evil as they always are to get quit of those evils which affect their bodily frame or their outward condition. Nay, we should naturally expect to find them far more solicitous and active in their endeavors to be delivered from such a calamity, than they could ever be to find deliverance from any temporal calamity, however great and however frightful it might be. And yet they are not moved by it to any serious concern. It does not seem to disturb their peace at all. It leads to no anxious inquiry as to the means of its mitigation or removal. It calls forth no strenuous exertions for that purpose. They regard and treat it as if it had no malignity in it, as if it gave them no present uneasiness, as if it would be productive of no positive or lasting injury. On the contrary, one might sometimes suppose, that they mistook it for their chief good, that they considered it as conducive alike to their honor, their safety, and their happiness, so fondly and so perseveringly, do they indulge in every species of gratification which can establish its power, or contribute to its growth.

Now, all this is so very unaccountable, it is so passing strange that the disease of sin should be universally prevalent,—that it should be confessedly and undeniably so alarming in its symptoms and so destructive in its issue, and that the great majority of those who labor under it should nevertheless be as contented as if they had nothing to fear from its ravages,—that we are tempted to impute their conduct to some secret, lurking suspicion, of the hopelessness of their case. We might be justified in supposing that in their view there is no method by which their cure can be effected, that it is therefore unnecessary for them to give themselves any trouble about the matter, and that their wisest plan is to give way to thoughtlessness, and to live on as their passions and inclinations may prompt them. But that is a hasty conclusion, if they have come to it; and we cannot allow them to rest in it, without endeavoring to convince them that they are laboring under a perilous delusion.

II. "Is there no balm in Gilead," no remedy by which the disease of sin may be cured? "Is there no physician there," no physician qualified to apply the remedy and able to make it effectual?

This question is not put by the prophet, as if information were needed and asked. It does not indicate any ignorance of that about which the inquiry is made. It does not imply the least suspicion or doubt respecting the existence, the certainty, and the sufficiency of the thing referred to. On the contrary, it is to be considered as a peculiarly emphatic mode of affirming what it appears to have no knowledge nor assurance of, and even as expressing wonder that those whom it concerns are not perfectly aware of it as a true doctrine or indisputable fact. It intimates, that where the evil of sin continues to prevail, it is not for want of means by which it may be thoroughly or effectually taken away,—that those who remain subject to it must account for that unhappy circumstance in some other way than by

alleging the helplessness of their case—that "there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a physician there."

Why, my friends, the whole purpose of the gospel is to proclaim and to illustrate this great truth; "God has so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, may not perish, but have everlasting life." Christ is set forth as the great Physician of souls. He has been appointed to sustain this character, by Him who rules supreme in the world of grace, as in the world of nature—who has taken compassion on mankind as subject to the malady of sin—and to whom the cure of that greatest and sorest evil is as easy, as the cure of any malady that can afflict the bodily frame. This spiritual Physician has not only come in the name of Almighty God, but he has come possessed of all the qualifications which are requisite to ensure his complete success in every case that can possibly be submitted to him. He has wisdom to devise whatever method may be necessary, for rescuing the victims whom he has been sent to deliver. He has tenderness and compassion to induce him to do, and bestow, and suffer all whatever it may be, which their circumstances require. He has power to conquer every obstacle that would frustrate his exertions in their behalf, and to render effectual every means that may be employed for their recovery. And he has all these attributes in an infinite degree; so that he is competent to heal those in whose instance the disease has assumed its most inveterate form, and even to call them back from the very gates of the grave. His blood, shed on Calvary, as an atonement, is the grand and sovereign remedy by which sinners are restored. And such is its inherent virtue—such is its resistless efficacy, that sprinkled on the spirit and the conscience of him who is farthest gone in the leprosy of sin, it is adequate to subdue the strength of the otherwise incurable malady, to root it out from the deepest recesses of his nature, to infuse into him all the elements of moral health, and to secure for him an endless as well as a happy life. If you read the word of God and give

credit to his testimony recorded in it, you will find that we have a "Physician" thus gifted beyond measure, and "a balm" thus efficacious beyond the possibility of failure, provided for us by the mercy of God. And not only is this truth exhibited to us in the gospel record, as one which we must believe, simply because it is there; —it is a truth which has been realized in the experience of every age, and which meets our observation in the case of all the redeemed in heaven and on earth.

In the annals of Christianity, we read of many who, though sin was preying on their very vitals as a deep-seated and mortal distemper, and though they were ready to perish, because they had no ability to stay or to withstand its progress, yet escaped from its destroying power,—felt that it had departed from them, manifested all the symptoms of renovated vigor, and rejoiced in the active exertion of those faculties which had been paralyzed, and in the return of those comforts and those hopes which seemed to have fled from them for ever. And they have testified that this happy change was wrought in their condition—because there "is balm in Gilead, and because there is a physician there."

Look around you, and behold in every Christian that meets your eye, a demonstration of the same important fact. They were once pervaded by the plague of sin: —it poisoned their hearts—it prostrated their strength—it covered them with moral pollution—it blasted all their joys, and it threatened them with eternal death. But now, the plague is removed—their heart is made whole—their energy is restored—they are adorned with the beauties of holiness, and they are ripening for a blessed immortality. And to what are we to ascribe their altered state? To what but to this, that "there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a physician there."

And to what is it owing, that in the Paradise above, there is a countless multitude who once dwelt in the lazar-house of this wretched world, inheriting from their progenitors that foul disease which sin introduced into the nature of man, vexed with all its painful and loath-

some symptoms, yielding to its encroachments, and nourishing its virulence, as if it had been their honor and their bliss, and amidst the delusive dream that all was well with them, sinking down to that perdition in which it naturally terminates—to what is it owing, that from such a state as this, they are now translated into a region, into which "nothing that defileth can enter," of which "the inhabitants never say, they are sick, because all their sins are forgiven them," where they offend no more, and suffer no more, and die no more, but exist in undecaying youth, in unfading bloom, in everlasting felicity? To what is this owing but to the immutable truth, that "there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a physician there?"

Yes, my friends, there is a Saviour for the "chief of sinners," and he is "able to save them to the very uttermost." There is none whose guilt is so aggravated that he cannot cancel it—none whose heart is so polluted that he cannot cleanse it—none whose danger is so imminent that he cannot deliver from it—none whose case is so desperate as that he cannot bring it to a favorable issue. And he is as willing, as he is able, to redeem the guilty and the perishing. He has declared his readiness to grant redemption to them in its fullest measure. He has given proof irresistible of the sincerity of his declaration, in the sacrifice of himself which he offered upon the cross. And after this marvellous act of condescension and love, there cannot be a doubt of his earnest, affectionate, longing desire to rescue those on whose account he performed it, from the fate to which they were doomed, from the destruction and misery to which they are exposed.

But, if Christ be thus able and willing to save sinners, why is it that so many are continuing in sin—living under its dominion, and dying under its curse? Since there "is balm in Gilead, and since there is a physician there, why is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?" And,

III. This leads me to state and explain some of the causes of such a melancholy phenomenon in the history of sinful men.

I. The first that I would mention is, that many sinners are insensible to their need of a spiritual physician.

A man may unconsciously labor under a bodily distemper, which is making rapid advances, and hastening him on to his grave. Others may see it, and lament it, and beseech him to attend to it, and to call in medical aid before it be too late. But it is all in vain, if he himself do not see the dangers of his situation—if he imagine symptoms of health where all around perceive symptoms of disease—or if any unsoundness which he does discover and acknowledge be deemed by him too trifling to deserve notice or to excite alarm. Then of course, he refuses to put himself under the care of those who have skill to cure him; he will not listen to their advice: his case becomes hopeless, and ere long he dies.

Thus it is with thousands infected with the disease of sin. It is a sad but indisputable fact, that sin cleaves to them as a mortal disease. But we cannot convince them of the fact. They shut their eyes against all the light by which they might be made aware of the perils and the horrors of their condition. They repel every argument by which we would convince them that they are practising a delusion upon themselves. They palliate or explain away all the circumstances by which we would prove that guilt does attach to them. And they perhaps smile at the anxieties we feel, and at the fears we express on their account, as chimerical and vain. And amidst so much security, and ease, and self-complacency, what is it to them that there is "balm in Gilead, and a physician there?" And what can it avail that we speak of Christ to them as a Saviour, and beseech them to have recourse to his grace and power? They perceive no attraction in the most interesting exhibitions of him that we can lay before them; no meaning so far as they are concerned, in all that we say of his ability to heal; no suitableness in his peculiar qualifications to

what they consider to be their real situation; no necessity to take counsel of him, to look to him, or to think about him. In such a state of mind we cannot expect them to put themselves into the hands of Christ, or to submit to the treatment by which he would save them. And hence it is that though the healing "balm" is within their reach, and though the omnipotent "Physician" is ready to administer it, they are as far from safety as if every avenue to either were closed. Hence it is that all our entreaties are heard by them with indifference, or rejected with disdain. Hence it is that they go on to sin yet more and more, that every feature of their case assumes a more frightful complexion, and that they ultimately perish in their iniquities. O that they were wise! that they would but consider! that they would open their eyes to the light of truth! that they would cease to flatter themselves with the thought of peace and safety, when destruction is so evidently coming upon them, when there will be no means of escaping from it! May the Lord himself bring them speedily and effectually to a sense of their danger, and dispose them to give a cordial welcome, and to lend a delighted ear to the glad tidings that there is "balm in Gilead, and that there is a physician there."

2. But, secondly, we may mention as another reason why sinners are not saved, or have not their spiritual health restored, that there are many who, though aware in some measure of the disease of sin, of its inveteracy and of its danger, and not unconvinced of the necessity of applying to Him who alone can save them from its power and consequences, are yet indisposed from doing so, by carelessness, or procrastination, or dislike to the remedies which they know will be prescribed.

A person laboring under a bodily distemper may be sensible of it—he may sincerely wish to have it removed—he may know the individual who proposes to accomplish his cure, and believe him to be adequate to the task, and he may be resolved to be at some time or other indebted to his skill for recovery; and yet through

the influence of an easy temper, from the habit of delaying what is urgent and important, and by reason of his aversion to the bitter draught that he must take, to the painful operation that he must undergo, to the many sacrifices of self-indulgence to which he must necessarily submit, he neglects to send for the physician, and to follow his needful advice, and so he falls into the grave.

And thus it is with a multitude of sinners. They feel and they admit that sin prevails in them,—that it is consuming the life's blood of their souls,—that if it be not taken away it must terminate in a fatal result. They allow that Christ is divinely appointed, and that he is every way qualified to accomplish their deliverance. And it is their wish and their purpose to commit themselves to his care, that he may cleanse them, and heal them, and bid them live. But then there is a listlessness about them which prevents their minds from yielding freely, and fully, and eagerly, to the impressions that have been produced by a view of their danger on the one hand, and of the means of escape on the other. That which has been emphatically called the "thief of time," besets and deludes them, and day after day, and year after year steals on, leaving them contented with knowing how diseased they are, and how they can be healed, and determined withal to embrace a convenient season for resorting to the mercy and the might of the Redeemer. Thus they linger on in sin and in peril, because they cannot bring themselves to submit to all that, in his wisdom, he must require them to do and to become—to renounce the gratifications in which they have been fondly delighting—to mortify their inordinate affections,—to "cut off a right hand or to pluck out a right eye,"—to be no longer slothful, but to be active in the exercises of piety and in the labors of righteousness,—and to have their whole system under such strict government, and such unceasing control, as that they shall never wilfully give way to a corrupt inclination, and never wilfully violate a divine commandment.

And thus it happens that though they are satisfied that there is "no soundness in them, and though they have learned that "there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a physician there," the health of their souls is not "recovered;" they perversely continue to feed the disease which, in its simplest form, is sufficient to destroy them; every successive moment that they spend without applying to Christ comes to them with accumulated hazard; the very sup ineness and unconcern which at first kept them away from him, increase with the growing perils of their condition, and before they have bestirred themselves to do what should never have been left undone, the mortal agony arrives, and then for them there is "no balm in Gilead, and no physician there."

O let me entreat such of you as recognise, in the mirror I have now held up a true resemblance of yourselves, to reflect seriously on what you are, and on what must befal you, if you persist in such a course. It is an awful thing to die; but it is infinitely more awful to die in your sins; and that you may avoid that dread consummation, be entreated to flee to Christ, by whom, and by whom alone, it can be surely and effectually averted. Act upon your convictions of your helplessness as sinners, and of the necessity of divine aid—act upon these convictions with firmness and decision—give energy to your purpose by remembering that in doing so is involved not merely your present comfort, but your everlasting welfare. Do not allow yourselves to be cheated into delay: The disease of sin, like may bodily diseases, may prove fatal in a moment; and, even though no such sudden termination should take place, yet, the longer you procrastinate, and the more opportunities you allow to pass unimproved, the more disinclined will you be to seek after Christ and the more difficult will you find it to surrender yourselves to his guidance. Nor be deterred or discouraged by the nature of his prescriptions. Enough for you, who must otherwise die eternally, to know, that the remedy which he provides is effectual —that he demands nothing from you but what it is your duty and your interest to render cheerfully—that sup-

port, and comfort, and encouragement, will accompany it, in adequate supply and in abundant measure—that your spiritual health being recovered, you will have ample recompense in its returning joys, for all that you may have suffered, or sacrificed in the pursuit—and that you will at length be admitted where sin cannot enter, and where, amidst the unfettered and delighted employment of the powers which were rescued from its deadly grasp, it will be one of your gladdest and most grateful recollections, that there was "balm in Gilead, and that there was a physician there."

3. Once more, sinners are not saved, or have not their spiritual health recovered, because they will not take the remedy simply and submissively as it is administered by Christ.

A man who is afflicted with bodily disease may be quite sensible that his danger is great, and he may call in a physician in whom he confides, and he may ask him to prescribe for him. But if he will follow only a part of the advice that is given—if he insist upon practising at the same time upon himself—if, from ignorance or pride, or perversity, or caprice, he be determined to have a large share in the merit of any cure that may be effected—his disease may be made worse instead of being mitigated, and its fatal issue may be rendered speedier and more certain, instead of being retarded or averted.

In like manner, how many are there laboring under the disease of sin, who feel something like a sincere and anxious desire to be delivered from it, and who apply to Christ for his assistance in accomplishing the object of their wishes; but who will not submit to his skill nor receive his help, in the way he is pleased to exercise the one, and to impart the other! They put their own ignorance on a level with his wisdom—their own weakness with his power—their own depravity with his merit. And thus they defeat the purpose of all that he offers to do for them. They counteract his saving work. They render fruitless the remedies that he prescribes.

They disobey, and dishonor, and provoke him. In the mean time sin retains its deadly hold of their heart, and grows and strengthens in its influence, as they proceed in their infatuated course: and, at last, though the healing "balm" is beside them, and though the great "Physician" seems to be their refuge and their hope, they languish, and die, and pass from this world to "lift up their eyes in hell, being in torment."

O let not such infatuation impose upon any of you, and prevent you from receiving that relief which you so absolutely need, and which you profess so earnest a desire to obtain. Give yourselves up implicitly to the dictates of Christ. He is able to cure you; and he neither needs your help, nor will he accept of it. He must have the entire honor of your deliverance, or he will do nothing for you at all. Trust in him as one who both can and will make you whole—who alone is invested with the power of bestowing upon you that inestimable and necessary blessing—and in whose hands you are sure of being restored to spiritual health here, and of being raised to immortal life hereafter. And being thus indebted to him for salvation from the foulest calamity that can distress or deform or degrade your nature, see that you devote your renovated powers, your purified affections, your "whole soul, body, and spirit," to his service and praise. And when you behold others still afflicted with it, and either ignorant or careless of the means by which they may be rescued from it, take pity on them as they are thus "lying in their blood," and bear your practical testimony, and labor to draw their earnest attention, to this blessed truth, that their case is not hopeless, unless they themselves make it so, for that you have found it realized in your happy experience, that "there is balm in Gilead, and that there is a physician there."

SERMON XVIII.

CHRISTIAN RESIGNATION.

PSALM xxxix. 9.

"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it."

When David composed this Psalm, he was evidently laboring under some heavy affliction. What that was, we are not informed. But whatever it may have been, it seems to have borne hard upon his spirit; for he says respecting it, "I am consumed by the blow of thine hand." Nevertheless, he did not murmur or complain under the pressure of his distress. He thought of the character, and the providence, and the purposes of that great Being, to whose appointment he traced it, and under whose government he suffered. And influenced by the considerations which these suggested, as well as upheld by the grace for which he earnestly prayed, he repressed every mutinous feeling, and cherished the sentiments, and uttered the language, of a becoming resignation. He looked up to God and said "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it."

This was the conduct of David. But it is to be feared that there are many of us, who, though placed

in his circumstances, do not imitate his example; that with some, the virtue which he thus exhibited is not maintained at all; and that with others, it is maintained but partially and reluctantly; that where the words of impatience are restrained from considerations of decency, the feeling of it is allowed to predominate; and that even where there is a cordial desire, and an earnest endeavor, to submit to the will of God, this submission is not practised with that cheerfulness, nor attended with that satisfaction which every true Christian will be anxious to experience.

To provide against this evil, there are two things that must be principally attended to. In the first place we must study to be the real disciples of Christ. For if we be only nominally so, we are destitute of those principles, without which, we can neither see the reasonableness, nor feel the workings of resignation. This grace has, on that supposition, nothing either to produce or to support it in our hearts. When all goes well with us, we may talk about it, and inculcate it upon others, and blame or pity those by whom it is not displayed. But when the day of our own probation comes, we have nothing to hold by or lean upon: we have no sense of an interest in the favor of Him by whom we are tried, no habitual confidence in the wisdom and mercy of his dealings with us, no well grounded expectation of being compensated for the possessions and enjoyments of which we are deprived; and therefore, we cannot freely or sincerely say that we are resigned, because the Lord has done it. And, in the second place, if we be the real disciples of Christ, we must have our minds turned to those doctrines, and habituated to those exercises of religion, which may be considered as affording the appropriate grounds of submission amidst the calamities of life. Unless we have frequent recourse to these—unless we live under their perpetual influence—unless we wear them constantly as defensive armor against the adversities by which we are assailed—it is obvious that when these come upon

us, as they often do, unexpectedly and severely, we are not prepared to meet them; our fortitude is apt to fail; and though we have then, as we have always, access to the throne of grace, yet our application there cannot be supposed to have the same fervency or the same effect, as if we had gone with those pious impressions, rivetted on our minds, and familiar to our thoughts, by which we are constrained to say in the words and spirit of the text, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it."

Let us now attend shortly to some of those considerations which should encourage us to adopt this language in its full and genuine import.

1. In the first place, when God visits us with painful bereavements, we ought to be resigned, because he only takes away what is his own.

He is sole and absolute proprietor of the universe. It is impossible, in the very nature of things, that he should alienate any, the minutest part of it. And, consequently, if he has bestowed any blessing upon us, there is necessarily attached to the gift this condition, that being still his own, he may recal it, at whatever time, and in whatever way he pleases. Accordingly, there is not a moment that we can say justly of any of the comforts of life, "This is ours;" without admitting at the same time that, in perfect rectitude, it may be taken from us, whenever it seems good to Him by whom it was originally given. He might indeed promise the perpetuity of the boon which he confers; and in that case his faithfulness would be a sure and unfailing guarantee, that we should not be deprived of it. But this does not apply to any of the good things of a present world. Every one of these is, unquestionably, limited. It is conveyed to us for a particular purpose; and whenever it has fulfilled that purpose, or when, through our perversity, it has ceased to answer its purpose, or when the removal of it would accomplish a wiser or a better purpose, it can be no longer continued with us. Not that God will act from any arbitrary or

capricious motive. His conduct must be always dictated and governed by the laws of infinite perfection. But it is still true that all our temporal mercies are at his sovereign disposal; and that, without any violation of the greatness and glory of his character, he may give them, and take them away, and restore them, and resume them again, according to his good pleasure. In all this there is no injustice on his part; for may He not do "what he will with his own?" and there should be no disappointment on ours; for had we reflected, as we ought, on the nature of our condition as his dependent creatures, we must have perceived that all the blessings we enjoy are revocable and uncertain, and we should, therefore, have been prepared to part with them, whenever it might be so ordered by the inscrutable counsels of his providence. Instead, therefore of feeling that any injury has been done us, when we are deprived even of those comforts which are dearest to us, and on whose continuance and security we reckoned with most confidence—instead of thus sinning and charging God foolishly—it becomes us to be grateful to him that we have possessed them so long, and in such measure—to condemn ourselves for having regarded them too much as our own absolute property—and, henceforward, to receive, and to hold, every blessing that may be put into our lot, with the conviction that it is still the Lord's, and that he will do nothing but what is right, when he sees proper to recal it either in part or altogether.

We cannot help, indeed, forming attachments to earthly objects: this is not only natural, but subservient to our duty, and conducive to our happiness. And there is nothing, either in reason or in religion, which forbids us to feel and to cherish such attachments, when we do not thereby devote to the creature what should be devoted to the Creator, and lay up for ourselves a store of future disappointment and pain. But surely it is wise to have them qualified and subdued, by the habitual persuasion, that they are liable to be dissolved,

r what is called accident—not by the malice or ce of our fellow-men—not by the power of a and irresistible fate, but by the will of Him who th over all;" and who, when he takes from us the ts of our affection, only takes from us what belongs nself by divine inalienable right. And if we be tomed to take this view of the subject, if we not speculatively assent to it as an abstract truth, but it as a part of our practical creed, and constantly e its truth, and lay our account with its exemplin, in our personal experience, it will, without img one generous or useful sentiment, prevent us indulging in fretfulness, or murmuring under our ions, and will lead us to surrender any comfort ver, and to make the surrender with patience and ness into the hands of God, from whom we at first red it, who in kindness has lent it to us for the ig day, or for the passing year, and who is as ous in taking back, as he was merciful in bestowe gift whose loss we deplore.

In the second place, we should not open our h with complaints when we are visited with painful vements, but observe the silence of resignation, se it is God who inflicts them, and the same God npanies them with consolation and support.

our very darkest and deepest afflictions of a tem- kind, it is seldom, if indeed ever, that we are loned to unmixed and unalleviated suffering. To ver deprivations we are subjected, there are rs some comforts left behind, or some new com- conveyed to us; which, if they do not compensate has been taken from us, tend at least to diminish xtent and severity of the loss. This, indeed, may e perceived or felt at the very moment that any ity has overtaken us. But when our grief has so bsided, as to allow us to form a calm and correct ate of our situation, we shall be sensible that there ins to us much more of the good things of this life, we at first imagined or were willing to allow. We

may have lost a friend, but some are still left to cheer us, or others are raised up for our comfort in adversity. Our worldly substance may have failed; but health is still spared, and opportunities are still provided, by which we may recover our independence and renew our usefulness. One favorite speculation may have come to nothing, but another has succeeded. Our good name may have been injured by the tongue of slander, but we have the means of vindicating what has been thus traduced, and of either living down the calumny, or exposing its injustice and malevolence. We look on the one hand, and we see the darkness of adversity approaching us: but we look on the other, and behold the light of joy is springing up to cheer our hearts, and chase away our sorrows. And has it not often actually happened in the case of the afflicted, that "their latter end," like that of Job, has been "much more than their beginning?" In all this there is something that is well fitted to inspire us with patience and contentment. Whatever we suffer is much less, and whatever we enjoy is much more than we deserve. Considering that we are sinners, and that the best of us are great sinners, we may well ask, "shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil also?" And we may well wonder that he has given us so much of the one, and laid upon us so little of the other. Nor is there a blessing of which we are allowed to partake, that does not intimate to us the benignity of Him by whom we are afflicted, and give us the assurance that, notwithstanding all that he is causing us to suffer, he has not abandoned us to destitution and pain, but has much kindness in store for us, if we will but listen to his warning voice, and "turn our feet unto his testimonies."

But He gives us consolation and support of a spiritual kind, far more precious, and far more efficacious still. Let our temporal privations be as numerous and as severe as they may, still there are sources of comfort which are not only accessible to us, but to which

we are invited, and from which we may derive all that is needful to sustain our minds. We have the Bible, containing doctrines that make us acquainted with that system of administration under which we are placed, and promises to excite and animate our hopes, and counsels to direct our steps in the most rugged paths that we have to tread, and examples to bring before us, in all its excellence and all its power, the virtue of suffering patience. We have "the throne of grace," where we may go, in the confidence of faith, to unbosom our griefs to our heavenly Father, to commit ourselves to his mercy and protection, and to obtain "the help" that he has promised to send us in "our time of need." We have the Holy Spirit, who is the comforter of the people of God in the season of distress, and who will communicate to us those secret, but real and powerful influences, which must avail to enlighten us in our thickest darkness, and to give us that fortitude which no dangers can appal, and no calamities subdue. And we have all the various ordinances of religion, by mingling in which our thoughts are solemnly directed to the glad tidings of the gospel; and our spirits refreshed from time to time with the exercises of devotion; and our sorrows soothed by the sympathies of the church; and our souls brought near to him who is the "Father of mercies," and the "God of all consolation; and our views carried forward to the rest and peace and sinlessness and joy of that kingdom which He "has prepared for us from the foundation of the world."

And having such alleviations and such comforts as these, it would ill become us to allow our feelings to rebel against their compassionate Author, because he is pleased, in his wise and inscrutable providence, to deprive us of blessings which we have no title to retain, and to inflict upon us sufferings, which it must be our interest to bear. Let us rather praise him that he touches us with such a lenient hand; let us sing of his mercy, while we are enduring his judgments; let our meditations be upon the blessings that are left us, while

our hearts are troubled by the departure of what was dear to us; and looking to the consolations which God imparts, as well as to the sorrows which we feel, and regarding him as the fountain from which both proceed, let our feelings, our language, and our conduct, be those of the Psalmist, as expressed in the words of our text, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it."

3. In the third place, we should be resigned to the will of God when he afflicts us, because affliction is for our good.

To mere worldly persons there is nothing good but that which gives them much pleasure, unaccompanied by pain; which gratifies their senses; which advances their temporal prosperity; which raises them to honor? to wealth, to influence; and which permits them to enjoy all these without interruption or annoyance. But to true Christians, that, and that alone is good, whatever it may be, which promotes their spiritual and immortal interests; which tends to make them wiser and better; which strengthens their religious principles, and improves their moral character; which renders them faithful servants of God here, and prepares them for the glories of his presence hereafter. And in this view, we must be satisfied, from many considerations, that the trials and distresses in which we are involved, have for their great and ultimate object, our essential welfare. What is the character of that Being who appoints them, or who permits them to befal us? He is a God of infinite mercy —who can have no pleasure in our sufferings—who therefore does not "afflict us willingly"—and whose only design must be to render us more holy and more happy. And while his goodness prompts him to form and to pursue this purpose respecting us, he prosecutes and accomplishes it by means of affliction, because his unerring wisdom selects that as the fittest, and most powerful, and most efficient, method of securing what he benevolently intends. Nor is it difficult to see the propriety and suitableness of this part, of his plan, which,

however, must be perfect, whether we can comprehend it or not. It is evidently called for by the state of our nature, and the circumstances of our condition. Our nature is corrupted; and, under the influence of this corruption, we are prone to indulge in sin and to forget the obligations of duty—apt to be intoxicated with prosperity, and to consider this world, when all our wishes are gratified, and all our dreams of joy are undisturbed, not as our temporary residence, but as our everlasting rest. And our outward circumstances engage so much of our attention, and present so many things to occupy our thoughts and fascinate our hearts, that, if unmingled with any thing that is harsh and distasteful to our feelings, we insensibly become the very slaves of worldly pursuits and pleasures, and continue to live as if we were never to die; as if we had no account to render, no immortality to hope for, and no spiritual work to perform. Now this miserable and fatal enchantment is broken by affliction. When the comforts which we idolized, or on which we doated, are taken from us, this demonstrates them to be unsubstantial and uncertain, and unworthy of all the fond regard we paid them We see more than ever the necessity of seeking for happiness in the favor of an unchangeable God, in the faith of a never-failing Redeemer, in the hope of an immortal inheritance. And "setting our affections on things above," we are led to cultivate, with greater diligence, that pious and holy character which it is the grand object of the gospel to form, and by which we are to be prepared for everlasting life.

And while we draw this conclusion from reasoning on the character of God, and from the nature and circumstances of fallen man, it is expressly taught and declared in the sacred scriptures. There, God is represented as our Father, who, all-wise and all-affectionate, does not correct his children from caprice, nor from malignity, nor for purposes of vengeance—but for their reformation and advantage, that they may be "partakers of his holiness." "No chastening for the present

seemeth joyous but grievous; nevertheless, afterwards, it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby." And "our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, shall work out for us a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory."

The truth of these Scriptures has been realized in the experience of thousands. When David said, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted," he spoke in the name of all the people of God who have been rebuked of Him, and have not despised his chastening. They have been chosen, perhaps, "in the furnace of affliction." They have come out of it, purified from the dross of sin. They have had their affections detached from the world. They have become more heavenly-minded. They have been brought back from their wanderings after vanity; restored to a more intimate communion with God; and taught to love, and to keep, and to delight in his commandments. He has taken from them the children whom they had suffered to usurp the throne of their hearts; and they have been instructed by this painful and salutary rebuke to give back to Him that devotedness of affection which they had hitherto lavished on the creatures of a day, and to be more anxious that they and theirs should be inheritors of that "kingdom which cannot be moved," than that they should continue to be united to one another by those ties which, however strong and however tender, bind them only to the earth and keep them far from heaven. He has deprived them of their riches: and they have learned, in the school of poverty, to lift, to the better and more enduring treasures that are on high, that soul which had been meanly and ingloriously wedded to the paltry treasures of the dust. He has blasted their health; and on the bed of sickness and languishing, during wearisome days and nights of restlessness and pain, they are feeling the emptiness of those vain amusements in which they had too long and too fondly indulged, and are reading, in this leaf of

the book of providence, those lessons of humility and sobriety and patience which the theatre of gay life was but ill calculated to afford, and are gradually ripening either for a closer walk with God in this weary wilderness, or for the full enjoyment of his presence in the promised land. He has permitted their reputation to be tarnished by the breath of calumny; and, no longer elevated by the applauses of erring and deceitful mortals, they are now candidates for the honor and the praise that come from God, for the testimony of a good conscience, and for the approving sentence of their Judge at last.

It is thus that God appoints, or overrules, the adversities of life for the benefit of his people, converts their afflictions into blessings, and makes them at once the tokens of present love, and the pledges of future glory. And shall we repine, with this great truth pressed upon us, by every view of his character, and by all that his word has told us; and by the uniform experience of those who have put their trust in him—shall we repine when he disappoints our earthly hopes, and puts the cup of sorrow into our hand, and even makes us drink it to the very dregs? Shall not we rather kiss the rod with which he smites us? Shall not we be disposed to receive all his corrections with patience and submission? And when the feelings of feeble and afflicted nature would prompt us to deprecate the sorrows he is laying upon us, shall not we still say, "Nevertheless, O Lord, not my will, but thine be done." "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it."

4. There is still another consideration by which we ought to be influenced when involved in affliction. God who sends it, is entitled to our patient acquiescence, our cheerful submission, because at the very time that we are suffering under his hand, he has in reserve, and is preparing for us, the happiness of heaven and immortality.

I need not, my friends, attempt to expatiate on the exquisite nature, the absolute certainty, the infinite

value, and the eternal duration of that happiness. We have no adequate description of it to give you; and you are not able to form any adequate conception of it. Yet you are surely so far acquainted with it as to know that it is an attainment with a view to which no labor, no suffering, no discipline, can be deemed disproportioned. And scripture has expressly said, that "the sufferings of a present life are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed."

Now, with such a prospect before us, would it not be foolish, and unbecoming, and inconsistent, to murmur at any evils we may have to endure in our passage to heaven—to grudge the hardships of the wilderness through which our covenant God is leading us to the land of promise—to be impatient amidst the darkness which shall ere long be succeeded by the dawn and by the brightness of an eternal day? Do not the soldier, and the mariner, and the man of business, submit to many anxieties and pains, borne up and animated by the anticipations of successful enterprise, and rewarded perseverance? And shall we be less contented, or less resigned to the privations of our lot; we, who look forward with a hope resting on the promise of a faithful and unchangeable God, to "the crown of life which fadeth not away?" Every thing in our case contributes to inspire us with the temper of the Psalmist in its highest and its noblest exercise. Be our tribulations what they may, they must soon come to a perpetual end, and be succeeded by a joy that is ineffable, and not only shall they be succeeded by a joy that is ineffable, but they are an essential part of that course of discipline which our heavenly Father employs to prepare us for entering into glory. So that to be disquieted, and cast down, and made impatient, by our afflictions, is to undervalue the happiness of the heavenly state—to prefer our present ease to our future salvation, and to arraign the wisdom of that plan by which God is training us up for the exercises and the enjoyments of the celestial world.

Only let us think of our ultimate and eternal destiny, as "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," and of the connexion which it has with our sufferings and our conduct in this our scene of probation; and we shall see abundant reason to cast ourselves upon the good pleasure of him who gives to us, and who takes away from us, as the God of earth and of heaven, of time and of eternity; and to say, in the words of our text, even though we have had sorrow upon sorrow, "I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it."

Those of you who have been visited with severe afflictions, would do well to consider how you carried yourselves in those trying circumstances. If you were fretful and impatient, and complained that you were hardly dealt with, this was unworthy of your Christian profession, because it was arraigning the goodness, the wisdom, the justice of God; and you have much reason, therefore to humble yourselves before him, to ask his forgiveness, and to be vigilant against the return of such a discontented, unsubmissive spirit, when you are again subjected to disappointment and distress. And, even though you have not gone the length of uttering the language of complaint—though you have been literally silent, and appeared to bow before the dispensations which befel you,—yet, if this were owing merely to constitutional apathy—or if it were produced by engaging either in the business or amusements of the world—or if it proceeded from causes unconnected with the faith of the gospel,—on any of these suppositions, there was no real resignation to the divine will—nothing of the gracious sentiment which is intimated in the text—nothing, in short, but a substitution of something of your own for that which acknowledges God; and, therefore, you have, in this case also, reason to confess your unworthiness to him, and to pray for remission, and to be solicitous that your mind may be so renewed, and so regulated, and so influenced, as that, in every future time of trouble, your submission may

result from Christian principle and be quickened by Christian hope, and that you may feel what the Psalmist felt, when you say what he said,—"I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it."

Let me now address myself more particularly to the younger part of my audience. You have not yet, perhaps, had many trials to distress you; but the Bible tells you, that "man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward:" and though every thing wear a gay and smiling aspect around you, you know not how soon the gloom of sorrow may overcast all your prospects. "Remember, then, your Creator in the days of your youth, before the years draw nigh in which you shall say that you have no pleasure in them." Prepare, even now, for the difficulties, and misfortunes, and evils of advancing life. And recollect, that your best and only preparation consists in your being at peace with God—in acquainting yourselves with him—in having a deep-seated faith in all the truths and promises of his word—in cultivating an experimental recognition of the perfect excellence of every part of his character and his administration—and in holding habitual communion with him both as the Hearer of prayer, and as the God of comfort. If you thus live by faith in God and in Christ, you are ready for whatever trials and tribulations await you. And being "reconciled to God by the death of his Son," and confiding in his paternal management of all that concerns you, and tracing every event that befals you to his will and to his doing, and satisfied that he orders all things wisely and well, and will make them work together for your present and your eternal good,—resignation will become the prevailing temper of your souls. You will not only be patient when adversity comes, but you will be enabled to rejoice in it. And thus, while it will secure your peace amidst the most formidable ills of life, it will fit you for encountering the agonies and the terrors of death, and be instrumental in preparing you for entering that happy

world where those dwell who have "come through much tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

And as it is the gospel which not only inculcates this grace, but holds out the comforts and the views by which it is formed and cherished, let the gospel be precious in our regard. Let us cling to it in every dark and distressful hour, for our own support. And let us be anxious that it may go forth, in all its blessings, and in all its power, among the sinful and sorrowing children of mortality.

SERMON XIX.

THE ACCEPTED TIME.

2 CORINTHIANS vi. 2.

"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

In the context, the apostle represents himself, and his fellow-laborers in the ministry, as working together for promoting and accomplishing the salvation of sinners. He entreats those to whom they address themselves not to frustrate their object—not to reject the message of reconciliation which they were commissioned to publish and to urge—not to despise or to refuse that which is the appointed provision of divine mercy for redeeming guilty souls from misery and ruin. To enforce this exhortation, the apostle refers to a passage in Isaiah, in which God promises to give the Gentiles to the Messiah, as a reward of his mediatorial undertaking. "I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succored thee." And, as this promise is made to Christ, the apostle extends its application to all who live under the gospel dispensation, reminding them, that, even under that dispensation of grace and

mercy, a limited period is fixed for the return of sinners unto God, and that there is danger in delaying, for the shortest time, to yield to that beseeching voice which calls on sinners to be reconciled and to live. It is in this point of view that we are now to consider the language of the text,—"Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

It is the wish of most men to obtain salvation; and therefore, it is their resolution that, at some time or other, they will repent. They have not yet forsaken their sins; they have not yet embraced the Saviour whom God has sent; nor is it just at this instant that the work is to be undertaken. They are engaged in some important business which requires all their attention. They have met with some worldly disaster which has disturbed their thoughts. They are in pursuit of some pleasure which is not very consistent with a change to the better. They feel an indolence of temper which indisposes them for mental exertion. Or they cannot spare as much time from their ordinary avocations as will be sufficient for the purpose. Some object or another engages them at present, and furnishes them with a pretext for delay.

But they are still determined not to let life pass away without doing what they are sensible must be done if they would be saved. They will not always be so much employed with other things as to prevent them from attending to the one thing needful. Some favorable opportunity will occur, of which they will not fail to take immediate advantage. If none should occur of itself, they will create one, and force a few passing hours into their service. No difficulty, no opposition, no temptation, shall then frustrate their design. And if, contrary to their expectation, any thing of this kind should take place, one alternative still remains, which they will most unquestionably adopt. Nothing shall hinder them from making their peace with God when they are going to die. Die they must; and at that interesting period, the best fitted, as they imagine,

for religious exercises and moral reformation, no circumstance surely can intervene to prevent them from accomplishing that which they had always wished, and always intended to accomplish. Whatever they have been in times past, whatever they now are, whatever they may continue to be, they will at least leave the world in a state of due preparation for another and a better.

Thus lulled into security by their resolutions of future amendment, thus perfectly satisfied that they have nothing to fear, because they are determined to repent, they go on to indulge themselves in all the desires of a corrupted heart, and in all the practices of an evil world—to disregard the secret remonstrances of conscience, to despise the warnings and invitations of the word of God, to trample on the blood of Christ, and to do despite unto the Spirit of grace. They dream not of the ten thousand circumstances which may occur to render a change of character unattainable. They reason with themselves as if repentance were the easiest thing which they can attempt, as if all its means were obedient to their control, or as if Providence were to work miracles to preserve them from the common accidents of life, and the common infirmities of nature, that their feast of criminal pleasure may suffer no interruption, and that they may be saved, though they have industriously labored to destroy their souls. Or if some thought of danger should intrude, if something should happen to excite a suspicion that their latter end may find them at once unprepared and incapable of preparing for eternity, they banish the unwelcome supposition by entering into a calculation of chances, which, as may be readily imagined, always bends to their passions, and terminates in conformity to the secret bias of their wills. They flatter themselves with the persuasion which originally deluded them, and which deludes them still, that they wish—that they not only wish but intend—that they not only intend but resolve, to amend before they go off the stage of life, let that event take

place when it will and as it may. And, therefore, every allurement prevails as soon as it presents itself, and religion is neglected, habitually neglected, as a thing of no immediate concern, or regarded only as the employment of a future day. In this manner many go on sinning and resolving, and sinning and resolving still, till at last they die as they had lived, enemies to God, children of wrath and heirs of hell.

Now, to be convinced of the unreasonableness and folly, the guilt and danger of this conduct, consider,

I. In the first place, the nature of repentance itself, and the commandment of God concerning it.

What is repentance? It is turning from sin to holiness; from sin, which is the shame and reproach of our nature, to holiness, which is its honor and its glory; from sin, which is the abominable thing that God hates, to holiness, which is infinitely amiable in his sight; from sin, which acts the tyrant over all who are subject to its power, to holiness, which constitutes the most perfect freedom that a rational creature can enjoy; from sin, which makes us liable to eternal condemnation, to holiness, which implies our acceptance of the appointed Saviour, and fits us for eternal life.

But if this account of repentance be accurate, with what propriety can we put it off to a future occasion? Can it be reasonable to delay consulting the original dignity of our nature? to delay what is well pleasing to him who is the greatest and the best of beings? to delay asserting that spiritual liberty which is so valuable, and which we must forego so long as we continue in sin? to delay accepting of Him through whom alone we can obtain salvation? to delay entering into a state of peace with God and with our own minds? to delay pursuing an object which we must allow to be pre-eminently excellent, and at the same time adhere to one which we allow to be worthless, vile, and ruinous beyond expression? Can such conduct be deemed reasonable? No: it is the most unreasonable, the most inconsistent, the most preposterous conduct of which we can be guilty. To

avoid such a glaring contradiction; to show that our resolutions of amendment are sincere; to prevent our conduct from giving the lie to our professions, it behoves us to repent immediately. If we would realize the views of repentance which we affect to entertain; if we would practically allow to religion that high importance of which we believe it to be possessed; if we would manifest our convictions of the evil of sin and the beauties of holiness; if we would act agreeably to the true spirit of any determinations we may have made to repent hereafter, these determinations must be instantly carried into effect. "Behold, now is the accepted time."

But the same conclusion may be drawn from the commandment of God concerning repentance. He has commanded us to repent. He has distinctly and peremptorily commanded us to renounce our sins, and to devote ourselves entirely to his will. Now, do we acknowledge his authority? Then let his injunction be obeyed. But can it be made a question when this obedience shall be rendered? Can we hesitate as to the time when we shall do what God requires? Can we think of putting off to some distant period compliance with his express and righteous appointments? Nothing surely can be more unreasonable and foolish and sinful than this. If we admit the authority of God over us to be supreme, and if we are satisfied that he has positively enjoined repentance as a necessary duty, we cannot discharge it too soon. To delay obedience, is to dispute his right to command, or to defy his power to punish; and is moreover inconsistent with our own supposed intention to repent, for we intend to do this, because the divine will has declared it to be necessary to salvation. The same reason that we have for submitting to the divine commandment at all, we have for submitting to it without delay. And he who has just impressions of the relation in which he stands to God will hasten to keep his commandments. These commandments are as binding at this moment as they can

be at any future period. They have always the sanction of divine authority. And if it be reasonable to yield to this authority, it must be most reasonable to do so, the very first opportunity that we enjoy. Why should we delay? Can any thing come into competition with what we owe to the great Ruler of all? Can any occupation be more urgent than the service of such a great and good Being? Can any consideration justify us in putting off the adoption of those means by which it is his will that we should be saved? When he commands us to repent, he commands us to forsake sin, which we never should have committed; he commands us to cultivate holiness, from which we ought never to have swerved; he commands us to surrender ourselves entirely to him, to whom we owe the most unreserved allegiance, and from obedience to whom we can at no period consider ourselves exempted.

If then we know any thing of the nature of repentance—if we acquiesce in the change which it implies—if we have respect to the commandment of God—if we have acknowledged the necessity of being devoted to his will,—and if we have even determined that, at some time or other, we shall return to him in his appointed way, let us not act so foolishly and so inconsistently and so arrogantly, as to let any business, any pleasure, any pretext whatever, induce us to procrastinate another day or another hour. If the thing is to be done, no time can be so proper as the present. And this would hold true, even though we were assured of a future season for repentance, which we could successfully improve. Even in that case it would be most unreasonable to delay the good work. Even in that case it might be said to us with justice, and should be said to us with effect, "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation!"

II. Repentance ought not to be delayed, because the longer it is delayed, the more painful and difficult will the exercise of it become.

The power of habit has been universally felt, and generally acknowledged. Thoughts which we have long indulged, practices to which we have been long addicted, acquire such a seat in the heart and character as to become, in some measure, a part of our system. And hence we generally hear habit spoken of under the strong and expressive appellation of a second nature. What we are accustomed to do, even though it has been originally disagreeable to us, grows as natural and easy as if we had been originally inclined to it; and if it be something to which we are inherently disposed, frequent use gives it a double hold on our affections, and renders it doubly spontaneous. Of the truth of this, every one's personal experience, as well as his observation of the conduct of others, must afford the most convincing testimony. The fact may not be easily accounted for, but still it is a fact invariable and undoubted, that habit is, in most cases, as powerful, and in some cases, more powerful, than constitutional disposition.

Consider this fact now, as applied to those who are delaying repentance to a future occasion. If habit, simply considered, is powerful, its power must be increased in proportion to the length of time during which it is allowed to prevail, because its power is acquired at first, by the frequent repetition of the act of which it consists. The person, therefore, who resolves to repent hereafter, is not only careless of the obstacles which habit lays in the way of his repentance, at whatever time it may be exercised, but waits till these obstacles are greatly multiplied and strengthened; and as he defers the work to an opportunity which lies at an indefinite distance, he thereby runs the obvious risk of having the obstacles to its accomplishment not only multiplied and strengthened, but perhaps rendered altogether unsurmountable. What folly! thus to allow habit, which is already felt to be abundantly strong, time and means to acquire additional force. What madness! thus deliberately to court additional difficul-

ties, when those now existing are so great as hardly to be overcome, even in the most favorable circumstances. A tree which cumbers their ground, and which they intend to remove, and which they know will require, even at present, the greatest exertions to eradicate, they permit to stand season after season, till it strike a deeper and yet a deeper root, and threaten to resist their most laborious efforts. Why not, on every principle of wisdom, begin the work immediately, and do it while it can be done with comparative facility?

But the extreme folly of the conduct of those who delay repentance appears farther, when we consider the nature of those habits which it is necessary for them to renounce. These are not habits to which they are naturally averse, which have been forced upon them by certain infelicities of situation, and which may be got the better of by change of place and external circumstances. They are not habits which, if originally unpleasant to them, they still in some degree dislike, and are anxious to subdue. No: were this the case, they would not think of delaying, they would instantly cast them from them. But the very circumstance of their delaying, shows that these habits are highly agreeable to them, or that they are deterred from the attempt by the difficulties which it threatens. In either case, the reason plainly is, that their habits are of a vicious kind: for vicious habits are always the most inveterate. It is much easier to seduce the sober man into intemperance, than to reclaim the intemperate man to sobriety. And the cause of this is to be found in the depravity of human nature. This is the original source of sinful habits. It is this which nourishes them into form and vigor. It is this which stimulates to the continued indulgence of them. It is this which makes them pleasing and delightful. It is this which produces a disinclination to throw them off, and resist the efforts which may be made for their removal. And those wicked habits, thus supported and cherished by the natural corruption of the heart, operate with a recipro-

cal influence, and give to that corruption a greater activity and more certain efficacy. The roots of natural depravity and the roots of evil habit are thus, as it were, interwoven with each other—they cling to one another with close and mutual attachment—and therefore, to eradicate evil habits is like tearing the heart in pieces.

It is true that divine grace can subdue all opposition, and overcome the worst and most inveterate habits; and, after all, it is to this grace you must be indebted for your repentance and conversion unto God. But it is also true that divine grace has not promised to work miracles in your behalf—that all those laws which are originally impressed upon your moral nature will be more or less respected by Him who established them—that he will not deal with you as mere passive machines in whom there is no will, no affections, no prejudices, no habits to be conquered and restrained by ordinary means. The very record which tells you of the necessity and efficacy of grace, tells you at the same time in most emphatical language, of the extreme difficulty of subduing evil habits. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil."

Be taught then by the united lesson of Scripture and experience on the subject of evil habits, not to delay the work of repentance. As the case stands, it will require all your efforts, and all your diligence, and all your watchfulness, to renounce the sinful pleasures and pursuits which have acquired an ascendancy over your wills. Do not then increase the obstacles which lie in the way of this necessary change, by continuing any longer in iniquity. But instantly and wholly forsake every one of them, and return to the ways of God: for "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation."

III. In the third and last place, repentance should not be delayed, because circumstances may occur to render it impracticable, and consequently to secure your ruin.

Every sin you commit renders you guilty before God; but when warned of your guilt, and of the danger that is connected with it, you go on to aggravate the one and to despise the other, you provoke God to give you over to a reprobate mind, to inflict upon you judicial blindness, to harden your heart as he hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and thus to render your impenitence itself a part of your punishment. In no case, indeed, can we affirm that this certainly happens: but it may happen. God may say to you, though you hear it not, "My Spirit shall not always strive with you. I withdraw my offers of mercy and salvation which you have so long and so obstinately rejected. You have joined yourselves to idols, and I let you alone. Sleep on now, and take your rest." And is this a calamity that you would choose to risk, for the sake of all that the universe can give? No, my friends; to be thus sealed over to destruction, while yet the day of grace is shining to all around you, is too dreadful to be thought of without feelings of terror and alarm. Expose yourselves, therefore, no longer to the hazard of such an awful fate: and let not this consideration be forgotten, that the very admonition I am now giving may, if you neglect it, be the last link in that chain which is forever to bind you down to sin and ruin and despair.

But supposing that God does not shut up his mercy, but still waits to be gracious, may you not in the course of providence be placed in a situation where there shall be nothing, as there now is, to suggest, to enforce, or to secure your return to him. At present you have all the means of grace operating upon your minds to persuade and enable you to repent. But you may not be always so highly favored. You may go where religion is neither practised nor believed; where your Sabbaths shall be all silent—where no sanctuary of God shall call you into its hallowed courts—where there shall be no ministers of the word of truth to speak to you, either its terrors or its mercies—where no friend shall be found to counsel you about the things that belong to

your peace—where you shall breathe the very atmosphere of infidelity and profaneness—and where every thing shall conspire to repress every rising conviction, and to encourage you in the path of ungodliness and vice. And if you repent not amidst all the spiritual advantages that you now possess, what is it that is to make you repent when all these shall be taken from you, and you are forced, as it were, to forget that there is a God against whom you have sinned, and an eternity into which you must go? If you find not your way back when the light of ordinances is shining upon your path; what hope is there of your return when that light shall depart, and leave you to walk in midnight darkness? "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

Granting, however, that no such change of circumstances should take place, the power of disease may seize upon you and lay you low on the bed of languishing and pain. That, indeed, you may flatter yourselves, will be a fit occasion—the very occasion which you always expected to come, and which you always resolved to improve—for attending to your spiritual interests. Alas! you know little of the nature of religion or of the work of repentance, if you think that the time of bodily distress is the time for beginning to attend to such momentous concerns. It is the season for enjoying the consolations of the gospel, and oh! how sweet and cheering are these to the heart of the afflicted saint; but to turn the mind, for the first time, to the work of preparation for eternity, when the body is overpowered by sickness or tossing in agony—that is a delusion into which none but the healthful and the thoughtless can fall. Go into the chambers of disease, and this fancy will delude you no more. It is in health that you must give yourselves to the faith and the duties of Christianity: if you wait till sickness comes, you may perhaps express regret, and feel remorse, and form resolutions; but oh, there is far more to do than this; and the prob-

ability is that it will never be done. "Sufficient unto that day is the evil thereof." "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

And is there not soundness of mind, which is still more necessary than health of body, for attending to the concerns of the soul; but of which you may be deprived when you are least expecting it. If reason be lost, the gospel is nothing to us—we have gone as it were into another world, where the message of salvation cannot reach us. And if we have allowed the season of improvement to pass away without having stamped upon our character those features of grace and of holiness which the eye of God would have recognised amidst all the ruins of our intellectual frame, what is there that we can plead when we go from the wilderness of dreams and fancies, into the realities of the eternal scene? the book of life is opened and our names are not there. We foolishly waited till the mind could no longer lay hold of an offered Saviour. And now reason may never again ascend her throne, or wield her sceptre, or shed her light upon the shaded soul. Intelligence is extinguished and consciousness may not return, till the Judge of all demand an account of faculties misapplied —of opportunities wasted—of warnings and invitations given to the wind—of folly infinitely greater than the madness, or the fatuity, in which the taper of our mental life is left to expire. "Now, then, is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

But though none of these things should take place, liable as we are to every one of them, we know that we must die, and we know not when our death shall be. "The Son of man may come on a day, and at an hour, that we think not of." We may be cut off in the midst of health, and youth, and gaiety. Oh! are there not many instances on record—has not the fact been brought home to our very doors and our very hearts—of men and women, the young as well as the old—the strong as well as the feeble—the sinner as well as the saint,—

being cut off at an unexpected moment, and sent to the bar of judgment, before they had time to cry for the mercy they so much needed? What has happened to others may happen to us: and surely with such a peril hanging over our heads, it may well be said, "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation."

Another year has passed away; and bequeathed to us many a lesson and many a warning.* We cannot think that we shall all be spared to the termination of the year on which we have entered. Before that period arrives, some of us assuredly shall have given in an account: and which of us, God only knows. It may be they who are least expecting, and least prepared for, the change: but did I say another *year?* O let us not flatter ourselves with so long an anticipation. The summer's sun may shine upon our tomb. Our eyes may even be doomed never again to behold the opening beauties of spring. The storm of winter may yet howl over our grave. Another *year!* "Thou fool, this very night, thy soul may be required of thee." "Let us then give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." Let us delay no longer the work of faith in the Saviour, of repentance towards God, of preparation for an eternal world. Say not "I must finish this undertaking; I must enjoy this amusement; I must indulge myself for this season: in a little time I will attend to the one thing needful." Oh! my friends, that time may never come: and if you reason, and feel, and act, in this way it will never come. "Brethren the time is short:" life is uncertain: eternity is impending and approaching. Wherefore gird up the loins of your minds: be sober and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought at the revelation of Jesus Christ: as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance; but as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation."

* Preached on the first Sabbath of the year.

n you retire from this place, allow not the good
ɜssions, which you have received, to be effaced by
ɜmptations and vanities of the world into which you
enter: but carry with you the lesson of the text;
ɔray that it may be engraven by the divine Spirit
ɔur hearts—"Now is the accepted time: behold,
is the day of salvation."

SERMON XX.*

VIEWS OF DEATH.

PSALM civ. 29, last clause.

"*Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.*"

DEATH, my friends, is a subject to which our attention has been frequently directed. We have read of it in the word of God, every page of the history of the world brings it under our review; and many a time has it come home to our observation and our feelings, in the melancholy experience of our own families and kindred. And yet how feeble is the impression which it has made upon our minds, and how limited the effect which it has produced upon our conduct, as beings who have been created at once for time and for eternity! We feel and weep for a little hour: we talk sadly of the departure of our friends and our fellow-creatures for a few passing days: we wear the customary badges of mourning for some weeks; and then we forget it all, and go on to live as if nothing had happened, and as if God were

* Preached in St. George's Church, Edinburgh, 23d November, 1817. being the Sabbath after the funeral of the Princess Charlotte of Wales.

never to "take away our breath, and we were never to die and return to our dust." Alas! my friends, we must acknowledge that this has been too much the case with every one of us, in the time that is past. And unless we shall in future think of death much more closely and much more seriously than we have hitherto done, there is reason to fear that the lesson will be equally unimpressive and unimproved in all the time that is to come; and that those, who are now loudest in their expressions of grief, will ere long be seen as heedless of God and a future state, and as much devoted to the pursuits and pleasures and vanities of a present life, as if this world were the everlasting rest of man.

Deprecating such an empty and unworthy result as this of the affecting dispensations of Providence, and anxious that you should be led by them to become wiser and better, I would now submit to your thoughts some particular and interesting views of that solemn subject to which the text refers. I say particular, as well as interesting views; for a great proportion of the evil to which I allude arises from this circumstance, that we think of death, when it is presented to our notice, vaguely and indefinitely. We regard it too much as a general abstract truth. We do not look at it in those individual and separate aspects which it assumes. And, consequently, our conceptions of it are destitute of vividness and force, and we see in it nothing more than the proof, and the lesson, of man's mortality—a proof which is rather acknowledged than felt, and a lesson which is too extended to be impressive, and is therefore learned only to be disregarded or forgotten. Let us, then, devote ourselves this day to the contemplation of death in a variety of its characters and effects, and to the consideration of those practical lessons which these are calculated to teach us. And may that great Being who "takes away our breath, when we die and return to our dust," enable us to meditate on these things with becoming seriousness, to apply them impartially to our own case, and to derive from them those advantages, whether

of warning, of improvement, or of comfort, which they are fitted to afford.

I. In the first place, we observe that death disorganizes and destroys our corporeal frame. This is a part of the subject on which it would be painful to dwell. The words of the text are distinguished by a combination of delicacy and emphasis; for they tell us that when God "takes away our breath, we die and return to our dust." They describe not the intermediate and humbling process which our bodies undergo, before they dissolve into their primary elements. They merely announce the execution of the original sentence, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return." Yes, my friends, this is the end of all flesh. You see man walking in the majesty of strength, or in all the charms of gracefulness and beauty; you see the cheek blooming with health, and the eye beaming with intelligence, and altogether you might suppose him a god in this lower world, incapable of decay and dissolution. Look again, and God has taken away his breath;—and strength and beauty and intelligence are gone, and a cold, pale, lifeless corpse, is all that remains. Look yet again when a few years have elapsed, and behold his very bones are consumed, and you cannot distinguish him from the earth in which he was laid, and you cannot even tell that it was a human being whose remains you are contemplating. O this is the fate of all the children of mortality. The fairest form that ever kindled admiration in the eye of man, or made his heart beat and melt with love—the most stately and vigorous and godlike frame that ever wielded the instruments of battle, or attracted the gaze of a multitude,—must cease to be beautiful or strong, and lie down in the grave, and say to corruption, "Thou art my father, and to the worm, thou art my mother and my sister!" What a lesson of humility and abasement does this consideration teach us! How foolish, with such a prospect before us, to cherish one feeling of vanity or pride! How inconsistent with our known destiny to live as if we were

ethereal beings, and our very bodies were to be immortal! O young man, why boast thyself in a robust constitution and an athletic form, why so anxious to pamper its appetites and minister to its gratification, since disease may deprive thee of all thy strength, and death will certainly bring thee to weakness and to dust. O, young woman, why count upon thy personal charms, since death will soon "consume thy beauty like a moth," and why so careful to adorn thy fair but fading tabernacle, which must ere long be shrouded from the eye of those who now admire and love thee, and be laid in the cold darksome grave, and moulder away unheeded into its kindred earth? But while death thus teaches us to be humble, as to all that is connected with our mortal part, it, with no less emphasis, directs us to the care of our imperishable souls. Our souls surviving the dissolution and corruption of the body, and designed for an eternal existence, rightfully demand that care which corresponds with their spiritual nature, and has a tendency to fit them for their future destiny. Death sends the body to the dust from which it was taken, but the spirit unto God who gave it; and that spirit must be prepared for appearing before him, by being clothed in the righteousness of the Redeemer, and adorned with the graces of Christianity. O then let us look beyond the comfort, and indulgence, and well-being of our frail and fading tenement of flesh and blood, and devote our chief attention to the health and improvement of the soul which inhabits it, so that when death comes we may resign ourselves to the dust, in the expectation of a blessed immortality. Nor are we left without hope even as to the body. It must, indeed, become the prey of worms and corruption. But it is "sealed to the day of redemption," which draweth nigh. The Son of Man, when he comes the second time, shall call it forth to the resurrection of life. He shall glorify it by making it "like unto his own glorious body," and "this corruptible having put on incorrup-

tion, and this mortal having put on immortality, death shall be swallowed up in victory."

II. In the second place, Death puts an end to all worldly distinctions. When we look around us in society, we see these distinctions universally prevailing. Some abound in riches and others are sunk in poverty. Some are destined to fill exalted stations, and others dwell in perpetual obscurity. Some are appointed to command, and others to obey. Some are adorned with titles and with honors, and others are born to the simplicity of inferior rank, and are never permitted to rise above the level on which they drew their first breath.

This variety of external condition is neither to be ridiculed nor condemned. It arises from the very constitution of human nature, and from the circumstances in which mankind are placed; and they who would violently attempt to destroy it, are regardless equally of the arrangements of divine providence, and of the prosperity and happiness of the social state.

But though, in itself, it seems to be both necessary and expedient, it too often engenders sentiments and conduct to which the whole spirit of christianity stands opposed. We observe it, on the one hand, giving birth to pride, contempt, and oppression in those who occupy the elevated ranks of life. We observe it, on the other hand, producing impatience, discontent, and rebellion among those who move in a lower sphere, and sometimes it occasions such animosities and crimes as tempt the philanthropist to forget his more enlightened principles, and to regret the existence of that adventitious superiority of one over another in which they all seem to originate.

Now there are many considerations which should operate in preventing or in curing these evils. There is a reference to the appointment and administration of an infinitely wise God. There is the suitableness of the existing system of things to the existing state of man. There is the evident influence which it has in exciting

industry, in calling forth virtues that would be otherwise dormant, and in promoting the general good. These views should all conspire not only to reconcile us to those worldly distinctions which prevail in society, but to lead us to cultivate the temper, and maintain the character, which they severally require.

But the most powerful and efficient correction of all, is the anticipation of death. When God "takes away our breath," every difference of outward condition is removed, and all the circumstances which separated one man, or one class of men, from another, are melted down into vanity and nothing. Look into the grave, and see how all shadow of distinction is lost for ever. The great and the small are there. And O why should the high be proud and contemptuous; and why should the low murmur and repine, when they shall all lie down alike in the dust and the worms shall cover them?

Yes, my friends, all earthly distinctions are destroyed at death. Sometimes, indeed, they may appear to remain. One man is honored with a splendid and imposing burial. Another has a blazoned monument erected over him. A third may have historians to record his name, and poets to sing his praise. And in contrast to all these, a fourth may be laid in the base earth, and have not even a stone to tell where he lies, and fade from the remembrance, almost as soon as he passes from the sight of that world, in which he did little more than toil, and weep, and suffer. But let your eye penetrate through those showy and unsubstantial forms which custom, or affection, or vanity has thrown over the graves of departed mortals, and behold how the mightiest and the meanest lie side by side in one common undistinguished ruin. Striking is the fact, and numerous are its proofs. Every day that passes over you, and every funeral that you attend, and every church yard that you visit, give you the affecting demonstration. And sometimes God in his judgment, or in his mercy, sends a proof of it which knocks loudly at the door of every heart, and sets a broad and a lasting seal upon

the humbling truth. This proof he has lately sent us in the most solemn and pathetic form which it could possibly assume. There was one who had all that earthly greatness can confer; who filled one of the most elevated and conspicuous stations to which mortals are ever born; who had all of personal dignity, and accomplishment, and honor, that this world could afford; and who, as her best and highest distinction, sat enthroned in the heart of her country as their admiration and their hope. Such she was; but it pleased God, whose creature and whose child she was, to assert his own sovereignty, and to illustrate the emptiness of all terrestrial grandeur, by taking away her breath, and she died, and is returning to her dust. And what, think you, my friends, are the distinctions in which she is now rejoicing? Not in those with which she was surrounded and adorned on earth; these have lost all their importance and all their charms, and even that universal and affectionate respect in which she was held, appears to her now a very little thing. But there are distinctions which death cannot touch, and which are now, we trust, the glory and the joy of her departed spirit. To her, we trust, it is now given to rejoice, that in the high places of this wilderness, she was enabled, by divine grace, to confide in the mercy of her God and in the merits of her Redeemer; that she paid a practical regard to the exercises of devotion; that she reverenced the Lord's day; that she performed her relative duties with affection and fidelity; that she set an example of piety and virtue, amidst strong temptation and abounding iniquity; and that with the splendid prospects of an earthly crown, she did not forget her heavenly hopes, but aspired after that crown of righteousness and glory which fadeth not away.

Receive then, my friends, and practise the lesson which all this inculcates. It speaks to you who occupy distinguished situations in the world; and it says, behold the nothingness of earthly grandeur, and power, and riches. Use them as not abusing them, knowing

that their fashion soon passeth away. Though elevated in station, be humble in spirit. Let no contemptuous feeling be cherished, and no harsh conduct be practised towards those who are below you. Employ your influence and authority, not in oppressing innocence, but in checking guilt, and injustice, and cruelty. And whenever you feel tempted to abuse the advantages of your condition, look into the grave, and see the level to which you must come at last; and look beyond the grave, that in the immortality into which death introduces the saints of God, you may see the distinction to which it is your highest honor to aspire, and which it will be your highest happiness to attain. The same fact speaks to you who are moving in the humble walks of life; to you it says, Why repine that you are not invested with the insignia of worldly greatness, that you are not favored with wealth, that you have not been born or raised to stations from which you might look down on your fellow-men? why repine that these distinctions are not yours, since the time is fast approaching when you shall return to your dust, and they shall be as if they had never been? Envy not such fleeting possessions—scowl not on those to whom they belong —"give honor to whom honor is due"—"be contented with such things as ye have"—and seek to obtain those distinctions of principle and of character which are within your reach, which elevate you in the sight of God, which perish not in the grave, and which shall pass with you into the inheritance that is on high, and that lasts forever.

III. In the third place, death terminates all labor and all pleasure under the sun.

What a scene of activity and toil does this world present to us! From inclination or necessity all are busily engaged. Some are gaining their daily bread by the sweat of their brow. Others are seeking for wealth in the higher walks of speculation and industry. And some are searching for more enlarged information, or studying to extend the boundaries of human knowledge,

by exertions both of mind and body. Every one has some object of ambition, and every one is pursuing it with ardor and hope. Such is the aspect which society presents to us. But death interposes; and the arm of diligence is arrested, and the occupation of life is gone forever. Only anticipate the conclusion of a few years, and all the frail mortals, who now employ themselves in the active scenes of this world, shall have died and returned to their dust. God shall take away their breath, one by one, till each and all of them shall have sunk into the place of silence and of rest. Now, is our labor pleasant? Let us then apply to it the hand of diligence. Let us, if possible, increase in it more and more; let us engage in it for a useful, honorable, legitimate object; and let us be stimulated to the persevering pursuit, by the consideration that we must, sooner or later, submit to the paralysing stroke of death; and that it will be our shame and our condemnation, to be found standing idle, or acting with but partial earnestness, when we had such a prospect before us? On the other hand, are our labors painful? From age, or from infirmity, or from any other cause, is industry a burden which we can neither easily bear, nor afford to throw away? And are our spirits ready to sink under the hard alternative? Let us be patient, and let us still endeavor to perform our duty. Our hardships will not always last. Death will come to our relief. The grave shall open its peaceful bosom to receive us. And, sleeping in the dust, we shall forget alike our sorrows and our toils.

But there is a work far more important than the ordinary labors and business of the world, which death must also terminate. I mean the work of salvation and of righteousness. While we live, we have means and opportunities for carrying on that work. But the moment that God "takes away our breath," we can advance in it no farther; we can labor in it no more. "There is no work, nor wisdom, nor device, in the grave;" and "as the tree falleth, so must it lie." What a solemn

warning does this afford to us, against sloth and inactivity in the business of preparation for an eternal world? How loudly does it call upon us, and how effectually should it prevail with us to work that momentous work while it is day! Be persuaded, my friends, to apply yourselves cordially to the faith and obedience of the gospel. Let every duty be faithfully discharged. In all your different relations, and in all your various circumstances, let it be your ambition, and your endeavor, to do the will of God. Let no good action be unnecessarily delayed, or carelessly performed. If there be any act of justice due from you to any of your fellow-men; if there be any poor and afflicted ones who need the consolation and the aid which you can give; if you have reparation to make for wrongs that you have done, or forgiveness to bestow for injuries you have received; if you have it in your power to assist in instructing the ignorant, in reclaiming the wanderer, or in spreading the knowledge of the Saviour's name; if you have any obligations to fulfil—any omissions to supply—any opportunities of usefulness, or of kindness to improve, as parents and as children, as husbands and as wives, as masters and as servants, as neighbors and as friends; if there be any evil habit you have to subdue, or any good habit you have to acquire or to strengthen—any one thing to do in any one department of Christian duty, we exhort and entreat you to do it while it is called to-day, for the period will soon come, and it may come sooner than you think, when God shall "take away your breath, and you shall die, and return to your dust."

And to those who are lovers of pleasure, how alarming is the language of the text. Whether they be addicted to indulgences criminal in themselves, or abuse by excess the blessings of providence, or partake of lawful gratifications with an eagerness and a relish which they feel not in the exercises of religion—in all these cases, it is useful to remind them, that not one of the objects on which they lavish their affections, can they

carry with them beyond the grave, but that, when God "takes away their breath," their sensual and worldly enjoyments come to a perpetual end. Ye who love pleasure more than God, can you believe this, and yet persevere in your vain and wicked course? Are your favorite pursuits to terminate at death, and will you still apply to them as the chief sources of your happiness? Is the grave to arrest the current of your joy, and will you limit your ambition there, and seek and prepare for no good beyond it? O do not thus brave the terrors of the last enemy—do not thus reject the warning lesson that he gives you; do not thus cast from you, and trample upon, the wisdom which God inculcates, when he declares, in his word, and by his providence, that he will "take away your breath." Rather let every instance of mortality awaken you to serious thought—teach you to number your days, and to improve them—induce you to enter into the ways of holiness and of life—and convert you, who are "lovers of pleasures," into "lovers of God." And let this be the effect of the dispensation which we now deplore. She who has left an empire to mourn her departure, calls upon you, by her death, and by her high example, to renounce a world of vanity and of sin, and to give your heart to that good Being, who alone can make you truly and forever happy. If she call upon you in vain, then, I say, weep not for her, but weep for yourselves. In spite of many allurements, and many disadvantages, she lived a pattern of domestic sobriety, and virtuous abstraction from the world. And she died, by the inscrutable will of God, that her pattern might be stamped upon your hearts, and that you might show your submission to the divine purpose, and your admiration of departed worth, by imitating the excellence which she displayed.

IV. In the fourth place, death dissolves the dearest and tenderest ties. And this is one of its most gloomy and forbidding features. Take from me the wealth, the luxuries, and the ordinary comforts of life—divest me of every honor to which I have been raised, and of

all the influence which station, and power, and opulence have given me—deprive me even of my good name, which is better than riches, and all that riches can command—do this, but leave me the friends that are dear to my soul, and I am comforted; for their presence and affection will compensate for any loss; and though they cannot rejoice with me, as I do not rejoice, they will yet weep with me when I weep. But when these "die, and return to their dust," I am left poor, and sad, and disconsolate indeed. Every tie which is broken by their removal, inflicts an anguish on the heart, which none but they who have experienced it can adequately conceive, and casts a shade over the path of life, which its brightest hours can with difficulty chase away. O, it is easy for those who have never felt it, to talk pathetically on this mournful subject. But you alone, my friends, who have watched the deathbed of a venerated parent, or a beloved child, of the partner of your bosom, or the sister, or the brother, or the friend of your heart —you alone can tell, that there is no sorrow like to that which you feel, when God "takes away the breath," of those whom you fondly love, and with whose existence your own seemed inseparably entwined. Under the pressure of this sorrow, when we have just listened to the parting breath, and said the long farewell, and closed the beamless eye—when all that we admired of talent, and all that we loved of virtue, is fled, and the object of our deepest and tenderest attachment "returns to the dust," how apt are we to think that death is but sporting with our happiness, and to feel as if we were abandoned to darkness and despair.

Yet death, when it is dissolving those close and tender ties which link us to one another, is at once teaching us wisdom, and directing us to comfort.

It teaches us wisdom, by showing us the perishable nature of human friendships, and leading us to take a looser hold, than we might otherwise do, of creatures who must soon "die and return to their dust." It should not, indeed, prevent us from forming such attach-

ments, and from cultivating them with ardor, and from giving full scope to all the affections of kindred, and all the endearments of domestic life. But it should moderate the eagerness and the delight with which every susceptible mind is apt to enter into these relations, and to indulge in these pure and kindly enjoyments. It should induce us to associate with those who are dearest to us, under the softening impression that God may soon, or suddenly, "take away their breath." And it should constrain us to devote the best and highest of our regards to Him, by whom our friends are given to us, in whom infinite excellence resides, and from whose love neither life nor death can ever separate us, if we are his by faith in Christ Jesus.

But death, in this view, not only teaches us wisdom, it also directs us to comfort. Death takes away our friends and lays them in the dust, and they shall return to us no more. But if they have been worthy of the love we have felt for them—if they have been walking in the ways of God, and are meet for that "new heaven and new earth in which dwelleth righteousness," we have good hope, through grace, that it is now well with them for eternity. They have gone to "their Father and to our Father, to their God and to our God." They are where our affection, when purified from all the weakness and selfishness of humanity, would desire them to be,—in a world where they will sin and sorrow no more—where all their virtues in which we delighted shall be matured and perfected—where all their views of creation which we assisted in forming shall be brightened and enlarged—where all their hopes in which we participated shall be fully realized—where all their holy joys in which we indulged, along with them, shall become exquisite, unmingled, and permanent; and from whose delightful and everlasting mansions, where we expect to join them, they shall go out no more forever. O my friends, is it not consolatory to think that death is not an eternal sleep—that death shall not have eternal dominion over those whose departure we bewail—that their spirits

wing their way to the paradise above—that their bodies have a glorious resurrection awaiting them—and that he whom we dread as the spoiler of our friendships and our loves, is but the messenger who conveys our pious relatives to the realms of bliss and glory unspeakable. And while such views are consolatory, is not the comfort rendered sweeter when we are also taught to be "followers of them, who through faith and patience, are inheriting the promises," and to labor for the spiritual welfare of those whom death may snatch from our embraces? If death afflict us by separating from us our dearest and most valued connexions, how anxious should we be that they may live here as "the children of the resurrection" and the heirs of immortality, and that we ourselves may not, by our carelessness, or our impenitence, or our unbelief, be cast out, while they are admitted into the kingdom of their God and Saviour. Let this thought rouse us to activity and diligence in the work of the Lord, to personal godliness and fidelity, and to a benevolent concern for the interests of the friends whom we should mourn to lose by death, and rejoice to meet again when "death shall be swallowed up in victory."

V. In the fifth place, death blasts the fairest prospects of individuals, of families, and of nations.

We are naturally disposed to speculate on the future, to lay plans of improvement and aggrandisement; and, whether from reasoning on supposed probabilities, or from giving the rein to imagination, to anticipate great prosperity for ourselves, our friends, or our country. And it is not the will of God that we should be always disappointed. Sometimes, however, he is pleased to frustrate our surest and our fondest expectations; and one of the instruments by which he accomplishes his object is death. Death cuts off an individual; and all his schemes and hopes and achievements perish with him in the dust. Or he removes the head of a family; and the children are scattererd, and their patrimony is lost, and instead of dwelling in opulence or comfort, they

are cast upon the mercy of an ungenerous world. Or he strikes down the ruler of a vast empire, whose wisdom and influence and activity formed the safeguard of his dominions, and whose decease is a signal for internal feuds and foreign war. In our own recent experience, my friends, we have had a melancholy instance of the havoc which death sometimes makes in the prospects of man. It is not a single disaster that has befallen us, but a combination of disasters. And their intrinsic magnitude is deeply aggravated by the consideration that they are irremediable. Our beloved Princess, as an individual, had every reason to look forward to a length of happy days, she was in the possession of many blessings which she prized, and she anticipated many more which it only required time and opportunity to provide; but God "took away her breath," and all these visions of bliss have vanished like the morning cloud. In her domestic capacity she was equally affectionate and beloved, and there was all the prospect that could be desired of increasing comfort and lasting endearment; but she died in an unexpected moment, and she has left the object of her best attachment a solitary and disconsolate mourner. And with regard to her connexion with the nation and with the crown, what could we have wished for more, than the talent with which she was endowed, and the spirit that animated her heart, and the virtues that adorned her life, and the prospect which she afforded of giving birth to a line of princes, who, inheriting her excellence and following her example, might have reigned mercifully and gloriously over these happy lands? But she has departed, and all our hopes are buried in her tomb. Great reason have we, my friends, to contemplate all this with emotions of the profoundest sorrow. But though death be a cruel and relentless spoiler, he is a messenger of the infinitely wise and good God; and here he brings with him a lesson which it becomes us to learn and to practice. He teaches us to put no confidence in our own life, or in that of any of the sons or daughters of men. He teaches us to recollect how

feeble are all our efforts, and how short-sighted are all our best laid schemes, and how perishable are all our most sanguine hopes. He teaches us to remember that man, even in the height of his prosperity, and in the zenith of his power, is but a mortal whose "breath is in his nostrils," and whose "days are but a span." He teaches us to look up to God as the "disposer of our lot," as the "governor among the nations," as that Being on whose determination every event, whether public or private, necessarily depends. And he teaches us, in characters written, as it were, in the dust by dead men's bones, that we have no security for our happiness, but trust in his all-wise and righteous administration, and that we can have no comfort under the anguish of disappointed hope, which does not flow from the belief of his superintending providence, and from the hope of entering into that unsuffering kingdom, where none shall ever again taste of death, and where no scene of enjoyment shall be overshadowed by its dark approach. "O that we were wise and understood these things," and that the Almighty, when he sends death to wither our expectations, and lay them prostrate in the dust, would enable us by his spirit to "be still and to know that he is God."

VI. In the last place, death introduces us to judgment and to eternity. This is the most important view which we can take of it. To regard it as dissolving our connexion with time—as destroying the link between our bodies and our spirits—as putting a period to the pursuits and pleasures in which we take so deep an interest —as levelling all earthly distinctions—as severing the most tender ties—as blasting the fairest prospects, and disappointing the most fondly cherished hopes—all these are affecting views of death, from which much valuable instruction may be derived. But it is only when we take into view that which succeeds death, and think of its consequences in a future and an eternal state of being, that we regard it in its just character, or are in circumstances to derive from it its most impressive and

salutary lessons. And if our judgment be regulated by the discoveries of the gospel, we shall take this extended and comprehensive view of death. Our eye will look far beyond the tomb where our ashes are to repose. We shall recollect that death is not the extinction of the being, but a removal from a state of trial to a state of awful and unalterable retribution, and that according to our present character, it will either introduce us into the mansions of endless bliss, or consign us to the regions of unutterable despair.

O then, viewing judgment and eternity in connexion with death, let us prepare immediately, and with all diligence, and on scriptural principles, for giving in our account to God. We are guilty, and cannot stand before him and be justified: let us therefore apply in faith, and with earnestness, to the blood of Christ whom God hath "set forth as a propitiation for sin," and for whose sake he hath promised to forgive us all our trespasses. We are naturally depraved, and in our natural state are unfit for the kingdom of heaven: but let us apply for the influences of the Holy Spirit who will enlighten and sanctify us, and make us "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." Let no difficulty deter, and no allurement seduce us from a work so essential to our everlasting welfare. Let every coming day find us more deeply engaged in it; more attentive to the means by which it is to be promoted; more ready to sacrifice every interfering interest, that our souls may be saved in "the day of the Lord." And when at any time the corrupt propensities of our own hearts, or the blandishments of an evil and an ensnaring world, tempt us to negligence or criminal security, let us confirm our resolution, and quicken our diligence, by anticipating that awful day when God shall "take away our breath," and demand from us "an account of our stewardship," and assign us our eternal portion. Brethren, the time is short and uncertain, we know not when we may die, let us, therefore, set ourselves, instantly and cordially, to the work of preparation for what is before us: let us be

zealous in our endeavors to glorify God, to be useful to our neighbor, to maintain a conscience void of offence, to cherish that faith which shall be turned into heavenly vision, and to cultivate that "charity which thinketh no evil, which suffereth long and is kind," and in the bond of which, purified from all the petty jealousies, and resentments, and enmities of this vain and evil world, we shall be for ever united in the kingdom of our Father and our God.

Yes, my friends, we are tending to a place where strife and hatred are unknown. In this restless world, do what we can, we may not be able to ward off the attacks of misconception and calumny. We may endeavor "as much as lieth in us to live peaceably with all men:" we may do our duty faithfully, laboriously, perseveringly: we may study, with scrupulous care, to keep our "conscience void of offence, first towards our God, and then towards our brethren;" and yet after all, or perhaps on that very account, we shall neither gain the favor of one class of mankind, nor avoid the reproaches and misrepresentations of another. Motives will be imputed to us which we never felt. Circumstances will be invented or exaggerated to blacken our reputation. The voice of reason and of truth will be drowned amidst the clamor of violence and angry feeling. Actions that, at the very worst, are but errors of judgment, will be confidently set down, and malevolently decried, as if they were transgressions of the moral law: And what is least tolerable of all, to the malignity of known and acknowledged foes, there will sometimes be added the treachery and ingratitude of those who professed attachment, and to whom we have never been wanting either in duty or in kindness. Be it so. It only affords us an additional proof of the depravity of human nature, and of the utter worthlessness of human favor. But the path of duty and of comfort is plain before us. We must continue, my friends, to act agreeably to the convictions of our own minds, and to the standard of duty, according to the measure of light in which we

are enabled to view it. The moment we go into the principle of pleasing men rather than God, that moment we merit the censures, which, in other circumstances, are alleviated by the consciousness of their being undeserved. We must commit our cause to "Him who judgeth righteous judgment," and to whom we must give account at last. We must confide in Him, that if he see it to be good for us, he will, even in this life, remove the prejudices, and soften the asperities of those who have hated and traduced us. And at all events, we can look forward to the grave, which is at least one refuge, and not a distant one, from the persecutions and strifes of this miserable world, for there at length "the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest." There is a silence there, which our enemies cannot disturb; and peradventure, when we are reposing in that bed of peace, they by whom we have been calumniated, may be touched by remorse, and may lament, with unavailing grief, the wrongs which they have done and cannot repair. But death shall be destroyed at last: and there is a resurrection; and there is a judgment to come. Then the veil of ignorance shall be taken away, and the arts of wilful misrepresentation shall be exposed, and the sentence of truth shall be pronounced, and that mercy will be experienced from God, which is here denied by man. Heaven is the abode of charity; and there all our contentions shall be forgotten: and, united in the bonds of everlasting love, we shall join together in the grateful, and harmonious, and never-ending song of praise, to Him whose kindness has never forsaken us, and who has provided "a rest for the people of God."

SERMON XXI.

CHRISTIAN PERSEVERANCE.

1 CORINTHIANS xv. 58.

"*Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*"

THE "work of the Lord" means all that you have to believe and do, as disciples of Jesus Christ. It implies the principles you are to maintain, the affections you are to cherish, the virtues you are to cultivate, according to the lessons and prescriptions of his authority. It embraces your practical conformity to the whole of that rule, various and comprehensive as it is, which you find laid down in the pages of his word.

To you, who are his real followers, this work must not only be known, but familiar. For unless you have been acquainted with it, you could not have accepted of Him, whom it recognises as your Lord and Saviour; and if you were not intimately conversant with its details, this would indicate such an indifference to its importance and obligations, as to show that you acknowledged Him in profession only, and not in reality. The

exhortation of the apostle is addressed to true Christians. And such of you as profess this character are supposed to be aware of what you are required to aim at, and to be distinguished by, in order to substantiate your claim to it, and to be actually engaged in the pursuit of those spiritual excellencies of which it consists.

But, besides having learned what this character is, and fairly and seriously entered upon its duties, it is necessary that you be "stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in it." This is the duty, with respect "to the work of the Lord," which is here inculcated upon all of you who are desirous to enjoy those advantages with which it is now connected, or of which it is to be ultimately productive, in the dispensation of the great and gracious Master by whom it has been prescribed.

"Be ye stedfast and unmoveable." Having once engaged in the work of the Lord, you must never desert it,—as if you could, even at the most advanced stage of its progress, reckon yourselves either released from its activities, or free from its restraints. You must continue firm in feeling for it that devoted attachment which its honorable nature, and its vast importance demand from you; and you must be constant in attending to all the multiplied occupations in which it requires you to be practically employed. Nor is it enough that you merely persevere in the general undertaking—you must be "unmoveable" as well as "stedfast." You must not allow your attention or your efforts to be withdrawn, for ever so short a period, from any one department of it, however inconsiderable it may be deemed. There must be such a full purpose of heart, and such a resolute, unwearied, incessant endeavor for its promotion and accomplishment, as shall prevent you, either from abandoning it altogether, or from carrying it on with indifference or remissness. You are not, on any account, to cease from the minutest, or from the greatest of its labors, till the whole be finished according to the will of God, and you be fully

meet for passing from the sphere of labor and service into "the joy of your Lord."

Such is the obligation you have to fulfil in regard to the work of the Lord,—arising, at once, from its own intrinsic nature, from the express terms of the commandment which enjoins it, and from the great ends which it is destined and calculated to subserve.

The exhortation evidently supposes, that this work will be attended with many and formidable difficulties. And, indeed, every one who knows any thing of what a conscientious performance of it demands, and is, at the same time, aware of his personal incompetency to the task,—every one who is, in whatever degree, experimentally acquainted with it,—will immediately perceive and acknowledge that the supposition is correct. It demands from us a multitude of sacrifices and exertions, which we are naturally unwilling to make. It requires us to mortify that pride of understanding and of heart, which predominates so much in our fallen race. It requires us to "crucify the flesh, with all its lusts and affections,"—to deny ourselves to those gratifications to which we are most attached,—to renounce, freely and forever, the dearest and most inveterate habit, which is not sanctioned by the divine will. It requires us to engage in pursuits and exercises to which our minds are naturally averse,—to study an exact and spiritual conformity to the law of God,—to discharge, with minute and scrupulous fidelity, all the duties which it enjoins,—and to keep our hearts as well as our lives, uncontaminated by the pollutions of the world. And then, while our inherent weakness and corruption render compliance with these requirements no easy task, we are beset, on every side, with numerous and powerful temptations, to backsliding and apostacy from that cause which we have been commissioned to prosecute and maintain. We have to struggle with spiritual enemies, who artfully insinuate into our minds, the thought, that it is a hard and unprofitable thing to serve God. Ungodly men direct against us the shafts of that profane

ridicule, which has succeeded in driving so many from the ways of piety and virtue. And worldly pleasure, in a thousand captivating forms, addresses itself to our senses and our passions, and, by every method of allurement, solicits us to barter a good conscience for forbidden joy. In short, even when placed in the most favorable circumstances for carrying forward our Christian vocation, we are exposed to innumerable seductions from the devil, the world, and the flesh; and we must expect to suffer much, if we would faithfully and successfully perform what our divine Lord has given us to do.

Now, the exhortation of the apostle has a peculiar reference to these circumstances. It is an admonition not to yield to their influence. We are not treated as if, having trusted that "the Lord is gracious," and reposed our confidence in him, and begun our course of obedience, we required no farther advice and expostulation. Our dangers are pointed out—we are reminded of the necessity of being firm and stable in the midst of them—we are commanded and urged to act on the principle of an unceasing determination not to fall at any time from our stedfastness, nor to move from the station of duty, whatever and wherever it may be, which has been allotted to us. In spite of every discouragement—in spite of all opposition—in spite of the severest hardships, and the most tempting allurements, we are to prosecute the duties of our profession. Nothing will justify us in becoming negligent or idle; and far less in faithlessly or pusillanimously abandoning the engagements which have been authoritatively imposed upon us, and to which we have solemnly committed ourselves. There may be difficulties—but we must surmount them. There may be enemies—but we must overcome them. There may be temptations—but we must resist them. There may be distresses—but we must bear them. There may be persecutions—but we must encounter, and endure, and withstand them. We must be ready to suffer the loss of all

things—"to pluck out a right eye, or cut off a right hand"—to part with life itself, rather than renounce a cherished confidence in the cross of Jesus, or return again to the sins we have forsaken, or fail in the uncompromising discharge of any of our moral duties, or desert the ordinances by which God is honored and our spiritual improvement advanced, or do any thing which amounts to a dereliction of that holy service to which we have been called by divine grace, and to which we have been consecrated by our own voluntary deed. From this service, and from all that is essential to it, nothing whatever,—be it violence or be it allurement, be it the pain to which it may subject us, or the gratification which it forbids us,—nothing must ever be allowed to detach us, till He to whom it is rendered, shall be pleased to release us from our toils and our sorrows. It is thus we must be "stedfast and unmoveable."

But the apostle further exhorts us to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord." By this he means, that we are not only to persevere, but also to improve in it; that our zeal in carrying it forward is to burn with a brighter and a steadier flame; that our diligence is to become more uniform, and our efforts more conspicuous; that our virtues are to multiply with our opportunities, and to be invigorated by our experience; that our attainments in religious and moral excellence are to advance nearer and nearer to that perfection after which the gospel teaches, and encourages, and stimulates us to aspire.

It is to be expected, indeed, that if we seriously engage, and steadily persevere, in the work of the Lord, improvement will of course follow. The very exercise which our good principles receive, will operate in giving them additional strength, and stability, and influence. Temptation to sin, by being frequently and successfully resisted, will gradually lose its power to seduce our affections, and to lead us astray. Duties which have been resolutely and habitually performed, will become comparatively easy, and permit us to take a more

extensive range in the field of usefulness. The growing comforts that we derive from the faith, and obedience, and hope of the gospel, will induce us to live in closer intimacy with the Redeemer, in a more diligent observance of his precepts, and in a more lively anticipation of his second coming. That which was once the evil heart of unbelief will come to take clearer and more impressive views of those great truths which tend to purify its desires and to elevate its purposes. Sin will daily acquire a more loathsome and revolting aspect. Holiness will assume features of increasing loveliness and attraction. And the believing eye, fixed in frequent and devout contemplation on heaven, will realize there such prospects of blessedness and glory, as shall elevate the soul insensibly above the vanities of this world, assimilate it to the spirits of the just made perfect, fill it with the ambition of shining in all the beauties of that holiness with which they are adorned, and lead it by degrees to "purify itself even as God is pure."

In this light, the Scriptures represent the Christian character. They speak of it as advancing from one degree of perfection to another. They compare it to the natural life, which begins with the weakness of the babe, and goes on by successive and imperceptible steps, to the stature, and vigor, and maturity of a perfect man. They compare it to a race, in which the competitors redouble their efforts, and accelerate their speed, as they approach the goal at which the prize is to be obtained. And they compare it to the course of the sun in the firmament, who increases in splendor as he ascends, and "shines more and more unto the perfect day."

Nor is there any period at which this course of progressive improvement is permitted to stop. The very nature of the Christian's work forbids that there should be any pause or cessation in its progress. There is always occasion for proceeding with what has been already begun, securing what has been already ac-

quired, and improving what has been already attained; there is always some defect to be supplied—some allurement to be repelled—some corruption to be subdued—some grace to be cherished and invigorated—some evil to be removed—some excellence to be added. The motives to holy exertion and benevolent enterprise, not only continue to operate, but increase in variety and strength; and in proportion to their number and their force, they will secure a greater and a growing multiplicity of those acts of faith, and piety, and righteousness, and self-denial, and charity, by which every true Christian must be distinguished. And no man who feels the power of genuine Christianity, and who has embraced the truth in the love of it, and who surrenders himself to those spiritual influences which it exercises over him, can fail to be sensible that it is a part of his vocation to bring forth fruit continually, and to bring it forth in greater abundance, and in greater maturity, as a tree planted in the garden of the Lord, on which, from day to day, the cares of the spiritual husbandman are employed. Even the apostle Paul himself, who had labored so long, so faithfully, so diligently, so acceptably, and so successfully in the work of the Lord, did at no time count himself to have apprehended: he did not think that "he had already attained, or that he was already perfect; but forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth to those things that were before, he pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." And surely, if a man so high and so rich in the acquirements of Christian principle and Christian practice, deemed it incumbent to rise yet higher, and grow yet richer, in the measure of his heavenly calling, much more must it be incumbent upon us who are still but following him at an humble distance, to "give all diligence, to add to our faith, virtue, and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity;—that

these things being in us, and abounding, we may be found neither barren nor unfruitful in the work of the Lord."

Yes, my friends, this is the duty, which you have to perform. Regarding the work of the Lord as most honorable and glorious in itself—as contributing to the perfection of your moral nature, and in fact essentially involving it—as assigned to you by Him from whom you received your being with all its capacities and advantages—as endeared to your feelings by the grace and condescension which call you to it, as well as by the dignity and the holiness which characterize it—and as the only source of genuine comfort in this world, and the only preparation for the happiness of that which is to come—regarding it in these lights, you will never reckon yourselves to have labored in it with sufficient ardor or with adequate success, but you "will go on from strength to strength, till you appear before God in Zion." It is a part of your Christian work that you "live by faith in the Son of God." You will strive, then, that your faith may become stronger—more lively, and more appropriating, and more purifying; that you may be less biassed by those feelings of self-righteousness which are so apt to intrude between you and Christ; that you may have brighter views, and more impressive convictions of his all-sufficiency; and that you may repose a more cordial, and undivided, and delighted trust in him, as all that your souls can desire for their eternal salvation. It is a part of your Christian work that you exercise "repentance towards God;" you will study then to feel more regret and humility under a sense of your unworthiness; to have more affecting impressions of the odiousness and the evil of sin; to hate it "with a more perfect hatred;" to guard against the commission of it with increasing jealousy and care; to be more watchful of the purity of your hearts "out of which are the issues of life;" and to be more determined in your purposes of imme-

diate amendment, and in your endeavors after a better obedience.—It is a part of your Christian work that you discharge all the various duties incumbent on you in your different circumstances and relations. You will be anxious, then, that none of them be, at any time, disregarded or forgotten; that you may be more and more convinced of their obligation and necessity; that you may have a more decided inclination to perform them; that you may attend to them under the influence of purer motives; that you may be more industrious, more ardent, more resolute, more conscientious in fulfilling them; and that you produce in rich and increasing abundance, all those "fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." It is a part of your Christian work that you make a diligent use of the appointed means of grace and salvation. You will then endeavor to apply to these with still greater regularity and zeal—with more devotion of heart—with more purity of intention—with stronger desires and firmer purposes of improvement; to take more pleasure as well as to be more conscientious in reading the word of God; to be more observant of the sanctity of his Sabbaths; to wait upon him with more piety of feeling in the services of his house; to be more frequent and more fervent in your applications at "the throne of grace;" to apply these exercises more steadily and more faithfully to those practical ends for which they are recommended and enjoined; and to engage in them in such a manner, as not only to promote your own personal advantage and well-being, but to afford a more open and unequivocal testimony against the prevailing irreligion and profaneness of an ungodly world, and against the hollow professions and compromising practices of nominal Christians.

Thus have I attempted a short illustration of the duty prescribed in my text, with respect to the work of the Lord: we must abide by this work—no consideration must prevail upon us to abandon any part of it

—and we must make a progressive improvement in all its branches—till we can say with our Saviour, "I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."

But, perhaps, some will say, "We know that this is our work, but we feel ourselves unable to accomplish it—it is in many respects difficult and laborious, and painful—and we are conscious of no resources in ourselves that are at all commensurate to the exigencies of the case." All this is true; and it is well that you are sensible of it. O that the conviction were more lively and more habitual in your minds! for it would unquestionably lead you to apply with greater earnestness to Him who will "strengthen you with all might through the Spirit," and make you "more than conquerors" over the most formidable opposition you can be called to encounter. Yes, my brethren, He who has assigned you the work will give you power to effect it. His language is, "My grace is sufficient for you, my strength is made perfect in your weakness." In obeying his commandments, you ought not to distrust the faithfulness of the promises with which he accompanies them. And, indeed, if you be Christians, you know from experience that he is both able and ready to help you, to the utmost of your need. There is no mockery in saying to you, weak and insufficient as you naturally are, "Work out your own salvation"—for we have to add this compatible and encouraging assurance, that "it is God who worketh in you both to will and to do of his own good pleasure." The most liberal help to our spiritual infirmities is provided by the gospel. The Holy Spirit has been procured for us by the death of Christ: He is the Spirit of wisdom and of might; and he is promised to them that ask him. Indeed it is a part of your work as Christians, to depend upon his influences, and, in token of your dependance, humbly to supplicate them. Cherish this dependance, then—lift up this supplication to the Hearer of prayer, and you shall receive from him according to your need.

Trust in the Lord Jehovah, and you shall be "as Mount Zion which cannot be removed, but which abideth forever." "Wait thus upon the Lord; and you shall mount up on wings as eagles—you shall run and not be weary—you shall walk and not faint." Upheld by him who is the strength of Israel, you shall advance with vigor and alacrity in the way of his commandments, you shall be stedfast and immovable, always abounding in every good work—till finally you shall be able to adopt the language of Paul, and say, "I have finished my course—I have kept the faith—henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness."

And now let me direct your attention for a little to the motive by which the apostle encourages us to comply with his exhortation: "Forasmuch as ye know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord."

"Our labor shall not be in vain." If we be stedfast and unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord," he will bestow upon us a reward. He might, in the plenitude of his sovereign authority, have demanded our utmost exertions, without conferring any recompense. And, indeed, when we reflect on the poverty of our services, and on the sinfulness which mingles with every one of them, we have reason to wonder that he does not reject us as unprofitable and unworthy. But he mercifully beholds us in Christ, his beloved Son, who is "the Lord our righteousness and strength." And in consideration of what Christ has done and suffered on our account and in our stead, he condescends to accept of our faithful labors in the cause of truth and godliness, and to crown our perseverance in them with a reward suited to our attainments, and to the riches of his own grace.

The work of the Lord, indeed, may be said to carry its own reward along with it, even in a present world. There is "joy and peace in believing." There is a delight in obeying the law of the Lord after the inward

man. There is a gladness when "the light of God's countenance" shines upon us, which the men of the world know nothing of, even when "their corn and their wine do most abound." And such is the power of the "hope that enters in within the vail," and such are the "comforts of the Holy Ghost," that those by whom they are experienced—and they are in some measure experienced by all the faithful servants of God—are not only happy when their outward fortunes are prosperous, but enabled to rejoice in the midst of tribulation.

But the reward here mentioned is evidently future. The exhortation with which the promise of it is connected, follows those cheering and glorious prospects of the resurrection which the apostle had been holding out in the previous part of the chapter; and the resurrection of the saints is always identified with that celestial felicity to which it is a preliminary. It is a resurrection to life and immortality—to sinless purity—to spiritual enjoyment—to glory, bright and everlasting. It is therefore the happiness of heaven which the apostle teaches us to anticipate as the termination and the reward of our constancy in the work of the Lord.

And that is a happiness that may well animate and encourage us to undergo any toils, and to endure any hardships, which can ever belong to such a service. For it is a happiness accommodated to the noblest capacities of our nature; arising from the progressive and rapid improvement of our intellectual faculties,—from the indefinite extension of our knowledge of all that is excellent and sublime in the universe—from the state of purity and vigor to which our moral powers shall be raised when delivered from the bondage of corruption, and allowed to expatiate in a sinless world—and from the unwearied and unceasing exercise of our best affections on those objects and pursuits which are full of holiness and love, and peace and joy.—It is a happiness altogether perfect in its own nature: flowing from com-

munion with that Being who is the fountain of all goodness and of all grace; consisting in pleasures that Divinity alone can communicate, and that Heaven alone can furnish; unmixed with any of those evils, and undisturbed by that consciousness of guilt, which mar the sweetest of our comforts upon earth; and so exalted and so exquisite, so rich and so unbounded, as to baffle all the efforts of the human mind to conceive or to describe it. It is a happiness everlasting in its duration—to be enjoyed without interruption and without end. It is a "kingdom that cannot be moved;" "an inheritance incorruptible, as well as undefiled" "a crown of glory that fadeth not away." It is immortal as the soul of man, and eternal as the throne of God. It is a happiness secured to every believer beyond the possibility of disappointment or loss. Purchased by the blood of Christ, and promised in the word of truth, and laid up in store by him who is Lord of all, it may be anticipated with unsuspecting and unreserved confidence. "*Ye know*," says the apostle, "that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord." The riches of your Redeemer's love might have warranted you to expect it; but He removes all doubt and anxiety that may arise in your minds, by condescending, through the words of our text, to pledge his faithfulness to bestow the reward. Sooner will he deny himself, than frustrate the hopes with which he has inspired and encouraged you. It may still be necessary for you to continue your labors. You may still have to encounter difficulties, and persecutions, and hardships. Still may there be a great deal for you to do and a great deal to suffer. But fear not. Be not cast down. "Possess your souls in patience." "Rejoice in your tribulations." "Your witness is in heaven; your record is on high; your "names are written in the book of life;" and ere long you shall have the blessedness of those who, having "lived in the Lord, die also in the Lord,

who rest from their labors, and whose works do follow them." Persevere then in your Christian course. Be not "of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe to the saving of the soul." "Be stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor shall not be in vain in the Lord." Amen.

SERMON XXII.*

THE CHRISTIAN MINISTER'S FAREWELL.

2 TIMOTHY iii. 13.

"*Continue thou in the things which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them.*"

THE writer of these words, knowing that he was about to be "offered up," and that "the time of his departure was at hand," was not willing that one whom he regarded as his son in the gospel of Jesus Christ, should want that peculiar inducement to pastoral fidelity, and Christian perseverance, which arises from a parting injunction. He calls upon him, therefore, to remember the instructions he had received, and to continue in them; and he gives force to the exhortation, by reminding him of the authority on which they were founded.

In like manner, I would address you, my brethren; and as the pastoral relation, which for some years has subsisted between us, is about to be dissolved, I trust that you will bear with me, while I say a few words in reference to our present circumstances.

* Preached in the New Greyfriars's Church, on the afternoon of Sabbath, 12th June, 1814, at the close of his ministry in that charge.

I return my best thanks to you all, elders and people, for the attention and kindness I have uniformly experienced since I came among you. Be assured, I shall always retain a grateful recollection of it. It will ever afford me the sincerest pleasure to hear of your welfare. I pray that the Lord may bless you with every temporal blessing; but my most earnest prayer is, that you may be all saved—that not one of you may be lost—that we may all meet in glory.

It is from no affectation of humility I confess many omissions and shortcomings of duty. I hope, however, I have not failed so much, as to prevent you from complying with my request, for your indulgence and forgiveness. And O, unite your supplications with mine, for the forgiveness of that great Being who has entrusted me with the ministry of the gospel, to whom I must one day render "an account of my stewardship," and on whose decision the everlasting destiny of every one of us depends. May he grant, of his infinite mercy, that my "lack of service" may be supplied by richer and more abundant communications of his grace, and that, in the luminous and efficacious teaching of his Holy Spirit, you may be fully compensated for the defects of one who feelingly acknowledges, that his labors have not been commensurate either with his duty or his desire.

Yet, I bless God, that my endeavors have not been altogether without success. I know that I neither flatter myself nor you, when I say, that some portion of good has been done. And you will believe me when I tell you, that this affords me a pleasure which I would not exchange for a thousand worlds. To be the instrument of converting, or of edifying, or of preparing, even one soul for heaven and eternity, is, in my estimation, an honor infinitely purer and more exalted, than all the achievements which are limited to earth and time, can possibly confer. Let the man of science boast of the discoveries by which he has improved the arts of life, and promoted the civilization of society. Let the war-

rior triumph in the multitude and splendor of the conquests which his prowess has obtained. Let the patriot and philanthropist exult in having given freedom and prosperity to half the globe. I envy not the distinctions they have thus acquired, if there be a single individual among you, however poor and lowly, to whom, as a moral and accountable being, I have been useful. In this I rejoice, yea, and will rejoice to my latest moments, that I have "not labored among you in vain,"—that the doctrine which I have inculcated has produced some measure of saving and sanctifying effect—that there are some of my beloved hearers to whom it has been already blessed, and to whom it shall finally prove "a savor of life unto life." And why should not I be glad in this? "For what is my hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ, at his coming? For ye are my glory and my joy."

But far be from my heart, and from yours, any proud and lofty notions of our own power, as if we, by ourselves, could give efficacy to that gospel, of which we are only the imperfect channel, or the unworthy objects. "Paul may plant, and Apollos may water, but it is God that giveth the increase." I ask you, therefore, to join with me in ascribing all the praise to Him. "The treasure" has been committed to "an earthen vessel," but "the excellency and the power" belong to that Being, by "whose grace alone ye are what ye are." And blessed be His glorious name, forever and ever, that the word spoken has profited, in making you "wise unto salvation," and in "building you up, and preparing you for an inheritance among all them that are sanctified!"

Suffer, I beseech you, for a little, the word of exhortation. And let me address myself, first, to those who, in the course of my ministry, have been brought to "the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus Christ." Beware of returning to the darkness and the danger from which you have been rescued. Be not "of them

who draw back unto perdition, but of them who believe to the saving of the soul." You would not be guilty of the crime of apostacy,—you cannot even think of it without trembling and anxiety. By the grace of God, you are safely landed on a peaceful and happy shore; and will you plunge again into the perils of the dark and stormy deep? You have been made to exult in the sacred "liberty wherewith Christ makes his people free;" and will you again consent to be immured in the gloomy dungeons of sin, to be bound in its galling fetters, to be doomed to do its degrading work, and, at last, to receive its wages which is death? You have been permitted to look with the eye of hope into the paradise of God, and to anticipate its joys which are unspeakable, and its glories which are unfading; and will you now renounce the exalted prospect—will you turn away your eyes from beholding scenes so lovely and magnificent—will you abandon all your interest in that rich inheritance, and again seek for happiness in the vain, the fleeting, the sinful pleasures of a world, which can give you no peace here, and must abandon you to misery hereafter? O, no, you cannot be so cruel to your own souls. You cannot be so cruel to those who "watch for your souls," and whose highest satisfaction is derived from seeing you move onward in the path that leads to heaven. You cannot be so cruel to the church which is deeply interested in your conduct and destiny, and to whose triumphs you have so honorably contributed. You cannot be so cruel to your pious friends, who have prayed for you, and wept for you, and whose prayers have been answered, and whose tears have been wiped away, by your conversion unto God. You cannot be so cruel to the angels in heaven, "among whom there was joy" over you when you repented, and who would sorrow at your fall. And you cannot be so cruel to that Saviour who died that you might live, who has "called you out of darkness into his marvellous light"—and who, in the tenderness with which he says to you, "will ye also go away?" demon-

strates how earnest is his desire that you "forsake not your first love," but continue "faithful to him unto death." By all that is dear to you in time and in eternity—by all that is precious in the sight of God, and of angels, and of saints, let me conjure you to remain stedfast in your attachment to the Saviour, in whom you have trusted, and to whom you have committed the keeping of your immortal interests. You have embraced Jesus Christ as your Redeemer—you have embraced him, because you are convinced that he came from God —because you felt your absolute need of him—because you perceived his suitableness to the circumstances and necessities of your condition. But the evidences of his divine mission which satisfied you at first, have lost nothing of their clearness and their force. The more you examine the state of human nature and of your own hearts, the more forcibly will you feel that if you are without him, you must also be "without God and without hope." And the more you contemplate the perfections of his character and the nature of his salvation the more distinctly and impressively will you see that they who have taken him as their Saviour, must have every thing which their souls can desire, or which their situation demands. Let the same reasons, then, which constrained you to embrace the Lord Jesus Christ determine you to "hold fast the beginning of your confidence stedfast unto the end."

Continue to believe in him—to love him—to obey him. Adhere to him with uninterrupted fidelity and unconquerable zeal. Better never to have heard of Christ, than after having heard of him, and seen him in all the grace and glory of his character, and accepted him as your Saviour and your King—to cast away your confidence—to break your engagements—and deliberately to prefer the yoke of Satan to His. But "be faithful to the death, and Christ will give you a crown of life." This is the promise by which he supports and animates you in the path of righteousness; and he is willing, he is able, he is faithful, to perform all that

he has promised. The reward may be distant—and yet it is not so distant, but that faith may realize it, and hope in some measure enjoy it, even here. And when it is received, how glorious—how exceeding great is it! It is rich as the benevolence, divine as the nature, and everlasting as the duration of Him who bestows it. It is true, my friends, that you may expect many trials, in maintaining your adherence to Christ. These, I am persuaded, you have already experienced; and you may find it hard and difficult to bear them. And yet I may ask if you have not experienced, amidst them all, a heartfelt joy which you never experienced before, even "when your corn and your wine did most abound?" A mind at peace with God, and with itself, has in it a source of satisfaction and delight which no evil can impair—which no calamity can destroy. And if, in past times, you have known this fact experimentally, trust me when I tell you, from divine authority, that you shall continue to know it experimentally, in every succeeding stage of your progress through this wilderness. For "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

But I would place your encouragement to persevere, in spite of difficulties and dangers, on yet a higher ground. Let the opposition which you may encounter from within and from without, be more formidable than your experience has ever known, or than your fears have ever painted—still I would say, persevere and be not afraid. "He who is for you is infinitely greater than all that can be against you." He who is for you is "the Lord from heaven." You cannot doubt his love, for he loved you even to the death of the cross. You cannot doubt his power, for it was he who made the worlds, and it was he who created your soul again from the dark chaos of sin. Trust in him then—apply to him—live by faith in him, and he will make you "more than conquerors over all your enemies." He will give you vic-

tory over the corruptions and deceitfulness of your own hearts—over the snares of an evil and fascinating world—over the scorn and persecutions of ungodly men—over the temptations of the wicked one—over the fear of death and over the power of the grave. In difficulties and in darkness he will guide you by the counsels of his wisdom. In weakness and in danger he will protect you with the arm of his everlasting strength. In sorrow he will pour the consolations of his Spirit into your wounded soul. And during the whole course of your pilgrimage, he will watch over you with unremitting care, and "keep you by his mighty power through faith unto eternal salvation."

I would now address myself to those Christians to whom I have been useful, by the ministry of the gospel, in imparting comfort and edification.

I would remind you, my friends, and I beseech you to bear it in your remembrance, that whatever comfort and whatever edification you have received through my ministry, has all been derived from the sacred Scriptures:—whatever it may be "that you have learned and been assured of," your knowledge and your assurance have all flowed from this divine source. If I have been the means of wiping away one tear of sorrow from your eye, of casting one ray of spiritual light into your understanding, of invigorating one principle in your hearts, or of improving one virtue in your character, these effects have been produced by the power of this blessed book. It has been my uniform endeavor to preach to you not "the enticing words of man's wisdom," which never did, and never can, save a soul, but only the genuine unadulterated word of God, as revealed to us by Christ and his apostles. I have labored to inculcate upon your minds suitable impressions of its truth, its excellence, its importance, and its authority, and so far as I am aware,—if I have at any time done otherwise, may God forgive me!—every doctrine I have taught, and every precept I have enforced, every promise I have unfolded, and every prospect I have set

before you, have been taken from the pages of this volume, which the Almighty has given by inspiration, which contains all "the words of eternal life," and out of which there is no light, no purity, no comfort, no happiness, for fallen and sinful men.

I cannot, therefore, give you an advice of greater moment, or one more consistent with the tenor of my ministrations, or more suitable to the views of the apostle, as these are expressed in the succeeding context, than this, that you hold fast and close by your Bible. Peruse it with frequency, with seriousness, with diligence, and with self-application. Treasure up its precious truths in your memory. Let them be the subject of your deep and habitual meditation. Apply to them for consolation and guidance. Yield yourselves to their purifying influence; and in whatever circumstances you are placed, whatever trials you are called to undergo, whatever duties you are appointed to perform, never for a moment lose sight of your Bible. Let it be your study by day, and your song by night. Let it be your companion in society and in solitude. Though you abandon every thing else, keep your Bible; believe it, love it, read it, and ye shall be happy. It is the light of your souls; it is the source of your joy; it is the ground of your hope; it is the well out of which ye are to draw the waters of life and salvation.

But not the half of my object in giving you this advice is gained unless I add, that the profound and affectionate regard to the Bible which I have recommended, must pervade all the religious exercises in which you engage, and all the religious conduct which you maintain. To this standard you must bring every thing which may be employed to influence your judgment, your heart, or your life. Nothing is good either in opinion or in practice which is contrary to its spirit or its letter, and which is not dictated or sanctioned by them. Is there any sentiment current in the world, which, from its apparent innocence or expediency, you

are tempted to adopt? Give it no quarter till you have brought it to the test of your Bible, and ascertained that it accords with what is written there. Is there any fashion into which the example of your friends or your superiors has a tendency to betray you? Avoid it, till you have found not merely that your Bible does not expressly forbid it, but that you can embrace it consistently with the maxims which your Bible prescribes, and the character which it requires. Does any worldly pleasure or amusement invite you to indulge in it? Refrain from the indulgence till you have consulted your Bible, and found it indubitably consistent with that heavenly-mindedness which it is the object of the Bible to cherish, and with that dignity of deportment to which the Bible teaches you to aspire. Do you peruse books for the purpose of improving yourselves in the knowledge and the ways of religion? Never forget to bring your Bible into contact with them, and though they be written by the wisest and the best of human beings, do not hesitate to reject what they contain, if they have departed from the record of the Bible, and "teach for doctrines the commandments of men." Do you come into God's house that you may hear his servants, and engage in his worship? Bring your Bibles in your hand and in your heart, and lend an obedient ear to the preacher, and let your feelings go along with the services, only while they are faithful to the truths of the Bible. Do you go to the throne of grace? Be careful not only to pray under the influence, and according to the directions of your Bible, but let it be your fervent and persevering petition that the Bible may become every day more precious in your esteem,—that you may discern it more spiritually, that you may believe it more firmly, that you may love it more ardently, that you may obey it more conscientiously and more diligently.

Again, you have received benefit by attending the public ordinances of the gospel. And can I urge a better or more powerful motive for persuading you to

persevere in that attendance? What reason have you to be grateful to the God of all grace, that you are so liberally furnished with the public means of instruction and improvement,—that the Sabbath regularly returns to you, with all its spiritual comforts and advantages,—that the sanctuary of the Lord is open to you with its pure doctrine and its scriptural worship,—and that a communion-table is spread in the wilderness for the nourishment and refreshment of your souls? And what reason have you to be grateful that your attention to these has been so blessed of heaven, that you can say from your own experience, "It has been good for us to draw near unto God, to keep his day holy, to go into his house, to listen to his word, to join in his service, and to partake of the memorials of a Redeemer's love?" Be exhorted to show your gratitude by continuing to wait upon the Lord in all the ordinances of his appointment,—by observing these with all the decency and with all the punctuality, and with all the affection which their nature and importance demand, and by giving them that prominent place in your regard and in your practice which, in every point of view, they are justly entitled to hold. Never neglect them on any frivolous or unjustifiable pretext, as if the business or the pleasures of this world could at any time deserve the preference. Let none of them be deemed of little consequence, or of inferior obligation. Go not, in the least degree, into the false notions of nominal professors and ungodly men, that they are not essential to any, or that they are not useful to all. You know that such notions are idle, dangerous and false: and you know also that they are too generally prevalent. But this consideration should render you the more zealous, and devout, and consistent in your attachment to the ordinances of religion. To manifest such an attachment is a duty which you owe both to yourselves and to others. You owe it to your own character, which you are bound to improve by every means in your power. You owe it to the gospel, to the truth and authority of which it is

incumbent on you to give the most open and unequivocal testimony. You owe it to your brethren, whom you are called on to support by your countenance, and guide and animate by your example. And you owe it to those who are "set over you in the Lord," whom it is your own interest to encourage in their labors, and who, if I may judge by what I myself have felt, derive no small portion of their encouragement, as well as of their comfort, from your regular and pious attendance on their ministrations.

I have one exhortation more to give you, my christian friends, and it is this—continue in the ways of righteousness, and abound yet more and more in godliness and good works.

You will do me the justice to admit, that though I have insisted strenuously on the doctrines of grace, as the peculiar and leading doctrines of the gospel, I have no less strenuously inculcated the necessity of holiness, as at once plainly prescribed, and in every way encouraged by the Christian system. And, I have no doubt, that you have felt "the grace of God which has appeared, bringing salvation, teaching you to deny all ungodliness, and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world." Now I beseech you to magnify the power of divine grace, by walking, with unshaken firmness, and increased alacrity, in the ways of God's commandments. Far from becoming "weary in well doing," you must be "stedfast and unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord." Give constant and growing proof that your knowledge is practical; that your faith is a living fountain of obedience; that your religion is not a set of speculative opinions, about which you can only talk, and dispute, and dogmatise; but a system of active and holy principles, by the operation of which your heart and conduct are made conformable to the will of God. Show that the sanctifying influence of the gospel is minute and universal; that it extends to every situation of life, and every branch of duty; that it regulates alike the

inward temper and the outward behavior. Show it in the fervor of your piety, in the integrity of your dealings, in the purity of your conversation, in the warmth, the extent, the activity, the disinterestedness, the spirituality, of your benevolence. Show it in your several relations —as husbands and wives—as parents and children—as brothers and sisters—as masters and servants—as teachers and taught—as neighbors and friends. Show it in your various circumstances—in riches and in poverty—in prosperity and in adversity—in health and in sickness—in joy and in sorrow—in obscurity and in eminence—in society and in retirement—in youth and in advanced age—in life and at death. See that there be nothing wanting which may contribute to the completeness of your character. "Add to your faith, virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity; that these things being in you, and abounding, you may be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Jesus Christ." Never "think that you have already attained, or that you are already perfect, but forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth to those that are before, press toward the mark for the prize of your high calling."— "Wait on the Lord that you may run and not be weary, that you may walk and not faint." Depend upon the grace of God, and pray for it, that you may be "strengthened with all might in the inner man," and "go on your way rejoicing." Be ever looking forward to the heavenly joy that is set before you, that you may be purified by the hope which it inspires, that you may be animated in the path of christian duty, and that you may be gradually ripened for the society of those, who having "kept the faith and finished their course," have entered into that "rest which remaineth for the people of God."

Let me now address myself to those who have been awakened to some concern about their spiritual state,

and led to inquire about the way of salvation. To you I would say, "continue in the things which you have learned." The concern which you feel respects the most interesting and important of all subjects, the salvation of your souls: and with that, surely, you can never be too much, or too solicitously, occupied: it may engage too little of your attention; this is your danger; but there is no risk of your going to excess in earnestness and anxiety concerning the happiness of that never-dying principle which lives within you. The inquiry on which you have entered is too momentous to be forgotten or neglected; it regards nothing less than the method by which you are to escape the eternal punishment to which, as sinners, you have been condemned, and to regain the eternal felicity, which, as sinners, you have forfeited and lost. O what a glorious object is this before you! And is there any thing in the way of difficulty, or of exertion, or of suffering, that should discourage you from the pursuit of it? Surely it is worthy of your best and most strenuous and persevering exertions. In its own nature, it consists of all that you can desire, and of all that you can conceive of good; nay, it surpasses both. And then you are sure of success in the pursuit. No doubt you will meet with occasional interruptions: the world and your own hearts and the wicked one, and the evil companions with whom you have hitherto associated, and the seducing pleasures of whose vanity and guilt you are more than half persuaded, will all combine to infuse doubts into your minds, to make you stop short in your religious inquiries, to induce you to go back to that state of carelessness and sin from which you had partly escaped. But against these be continually on your guard. They have never yet conducted you in a good way, nor afforded you any real comfort. Take up the resolution, then, that you will listen to them no more, till you have fully satisfied yourselves respecting the truth and excellence of the gospel, and till you have fairly tried what it is to be a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Do this, and be assured that soon, very soon, you will obtain the victory over all the opposition which now lies in your way. "Follow on to know the Lord," and you shall know him. Continue to "search the Scriptures," as containing "the words of eternal life," and testifying of the Saviour. Cease not to pray for direction and assistance from that great Being whose favor it is your object as it will be your happiness to obtain. Make diligent use of all the means of illumination with which Providence has furnished you. And be resolved to embrace the truth, wherever you shall find it, and whatever sacrifices of private opinion and of worldly affection it may require of you. Thus shall you, I say it with confidence, attain at length that faith which is to "the saving of the soul," which spreads over the mind that "peace of God which passeth understanding," and is accompanied with that "joy which is unspeakable and full of glory."

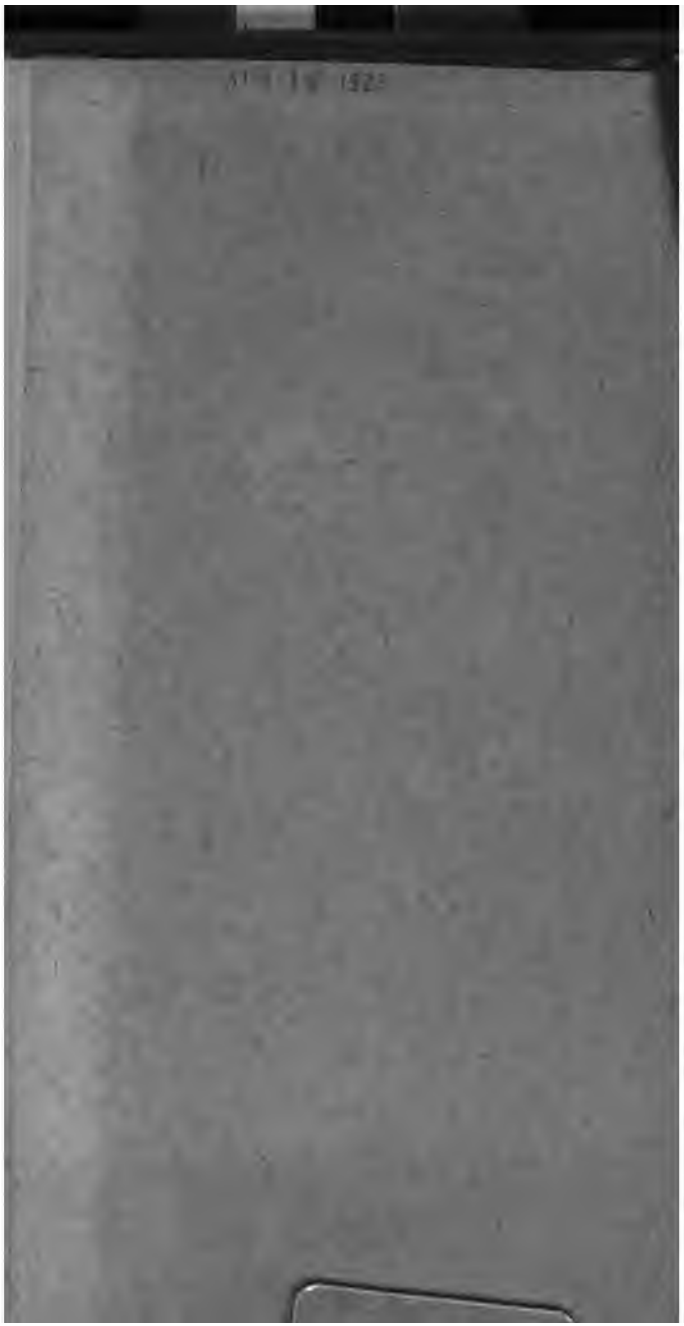
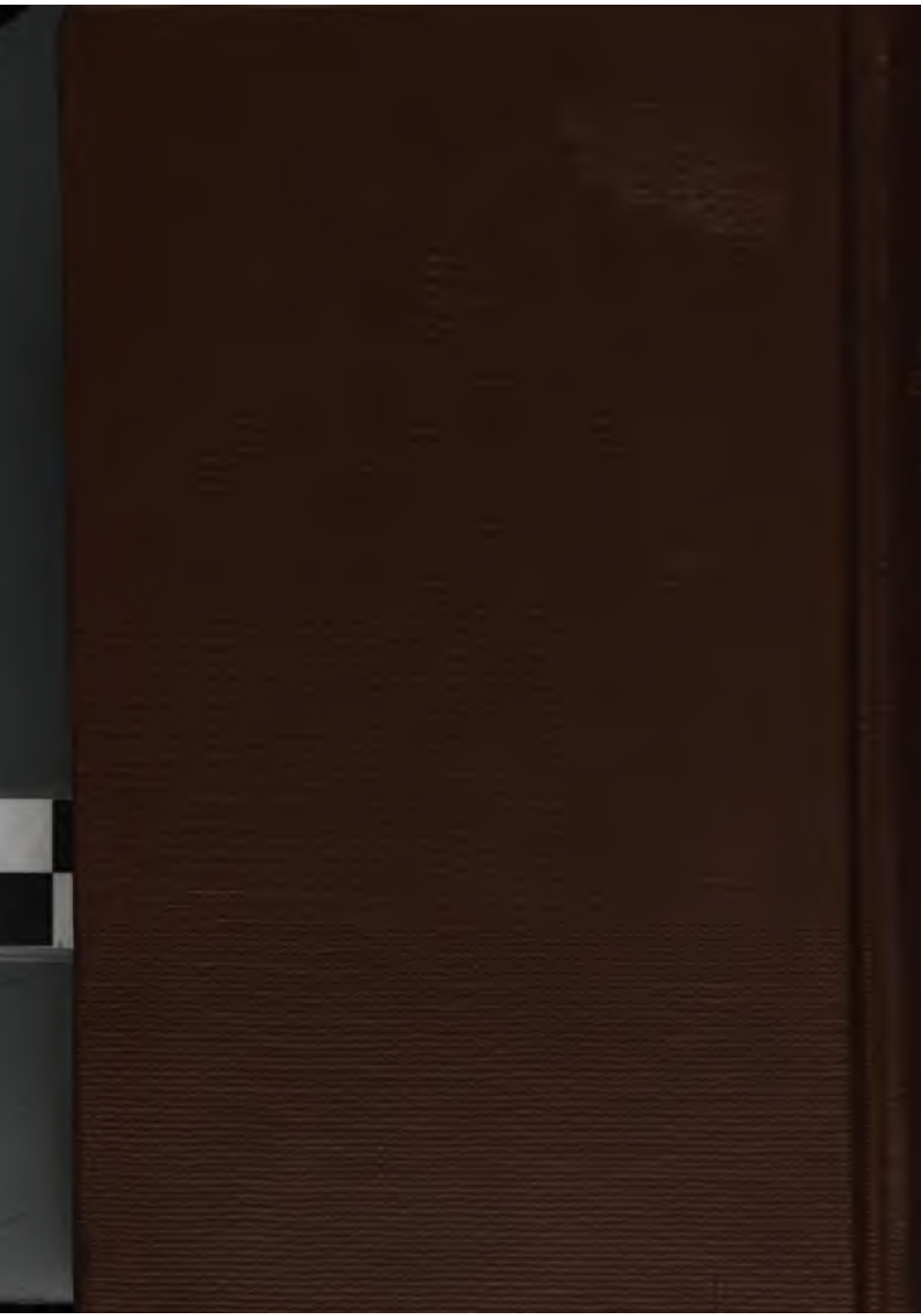
I must now, in the last place, address those who have derived no benefit from my ministry; who have given a partial, or it may be a regular, attendance on the services of the sanctuary, but are as careless—as unbelieving—as impenitent as ever.

I should be extremely willing—I should be delighted—to believe that there were no such persons in this congregation; or if there were, to pass them over in silent sorrow, and with prayer to God that it might please him to change their hearts. But it is impossible to disguise the fact that there are such persons; and the fact is too melancholy and affecting to admit of my repressing the feelings which it awakens, or of omitting this opportunity to make another, and a last attempt to reclaim them to "glory and to virtue."

Your consciences, my friends, must accuse you; and if you be not hardened to a degree that I cannot allow myself to suppose, they must also condemn you. It is natural for you, however, in that case to frame some apologies, by which your conduct may be vindicated, or your guilt alleviated. What these may be I cannot

pretend to imagine. But sure I am that whatever they may be, they can be nothing but "refuges of lies." In this happy land, where saving knowledge abounds, it is impossible for you to urge any substantial apology, or any satisfactory vindication. With regard to the privileges which you have enjoyed here, I shall make all the concessions which can be reasonably asked. I may have been in fault. I may not have labored with sufficient earnestness. I may not have placed the doctrine of salvation before you in its most striking aspects. I may not have always "rightly divided the word of truth." All this I am willing to acknowledge; and under a conviction of its truth, I am ready to cry out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

But think not that any deficiencies of mine will excuse your indifference to the concerns of your immortal souls, or justify you for living in rebellion against the God of heaven, and in contempt of the Saviour of sinners. You must account for the advantages which you have enjoyed, be they great or small. If much has been given you, much will be required of you. If little has been given, the less will be required. Still, however, there is something to be required; and without presuming to have exceeded, or even reached the ordinary average of ministerial talent and fidelity, your responsibility is great and awful, and well calculated to rouse you to serious thought and alarming anticipation. I have at least delivered to you the great message of the gospel. I have told you of your guilt. I have warned you of your danger. I have besought you to "flee from the wrath to come," to be "reconciled unto God," to accept of eternal life. I have represented to you the cross of Christ, as "the power of God and the wisdom of God for salvation, to every one that believeth." I have used many arguments to convince you, and many motives to persuade you. I have endeavored to alarm you by the terrors of the law, and to allure you by the mercies of the gospel. I have addressed myself to your hopes and your fears, to your love, your

gratitude, your honor, and your interest. And by the means with which this sacred volume has furnished me, I have tried to awaken you from the delusions of sin—to separate you from the enchantments of an evil world—to deliver you from the bondage of inward corruption, and, through the ministry of the simple truth as it is in Jesus, to conduct you in that way which leads to heaven and to glory. I have done this; but it has produced no effect; and in that consists your guilt, and from that results your danger. You and your minister must appear before the tribunal of God and answer for our conduct. Whether I be on the right hand, or on the left, I must be a witness against you, and if you persevere in misimprovement and indifference, my testimony must be this: "I delivered to these, my hearers, the message of God, but they turned a deaf ear to it; I offered them the salvation of the gospel, but they refused it; I showed them the love of a bleeding Saviour, but they were unmoved by it; I endeavored to alarm them by the punishment of hell, but they braved it; I tried to kindle in them the fire of holy ambition, by unfolding to them the joys of heaven, but they despised it; I cast upon them the light of God's word, but they shut their eyes against it; I exhorted, I remonstrated, I pleaded, and I prayed with them, but they would not come unto Christ that they might have life; they chose to live in sin, to die in impenitence, and to come into eternity unsanctified and unforgiven." Alas! and must this be my testimony? And what will you be able to say to it? If you should attempt to deny it, "your own hearts would condemn you; and God, who is greater than your hearts, and knoweth all things, would also condemn you." And what will He say to you? "As for these mine enemies, who would not that I should rule over them, take them and cast them into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth." This is the sentence of an Almighty and avenging God. Are you able to escape it? Are you pre-

pared to bear it? Are you resolved to set it at defiance? O no. "Who can dwell with devouring flames, who can lie down in everlasting burnings?" You cannot thus go deliberately into eternal ruin. Suffer me to hope that my last, my fondest, my most earnest entreaty will not be disregarded. Listen to the voice of God to-day, and no longer harden your hearts. This moment let the resolution be formed that you will have nothing more to do with sin; this moment vow to the Lord that you will henceforth be his; this moment let your perishing souls be cast into the arms of Christ, and surrendered to his saving power. This moment let your aspirations ascend to the throne of heaven for pardoning mercy, and for sanctifying grace, and for life everlasting. There is mercy, and grace, and life, for the chief of sinners, and for you. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and ye shall be saved." "Repent and be converted, and your sins shall be blotted out." Embrace the overtures of the gospel, cherish its spirit, submit to its authority, and "all things shall be yours, for ye shall be Christ's and Christ is God's. With this exhortation, and in the comfortable hope that you will comply with it, I now bid you farewell, "commending you all to God and to the word of his grace. May the Lord bless and keep you. May the Lord cause his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May the Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace."—Amen.